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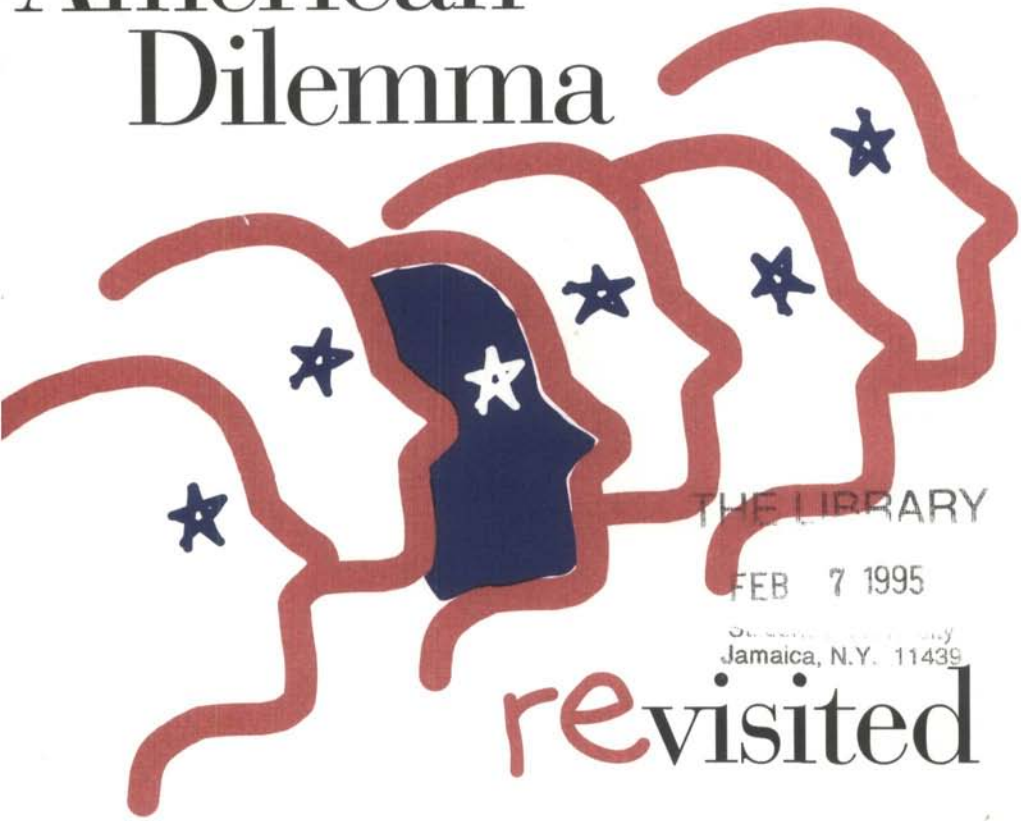

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DÆDALUS

JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

An American Dilemma Revisited

Winter 1995

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Contents

V Preface

Sissela Bok
1 Introduction

Robert A. Dentler
15 The Political Sociology of the African American Situation: Gunnar Myrdal's Era and Today

Ronald F. Ferguson
37 Shifting Challenges: Fifty Years of Economic Change Toward Black-White Earnings Equality

Walter R. Allen and Joseph O. Jewell
77 African American Education Since *An American Dilemma*

Obie Clayton, Jr.
101 The Churches and Social Change: Accommodation, Moderation, or Protest

Cassia C. Spohn
119 Courts, Sentences, and Prisons

William Darity, Jr.
145 The Undesirables, America's Underclass in the Managerial Age: Beyond the Myrdal Theory of Racial Inequality

Doris Y. Wilkinson
167 Gender and Social Inequality: The Prevailing Significance of Race

Antonio McDaniel
179 The Dynamic Racial Composition of the United States

John Sibley Butler
199 Myrdal Revisited: The Negro in Business

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Preface to the Issue "An American Dilemma Revisited"

IN CHOOSING TO COMMEMORATE the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, *Dædalus* is doing more than simply celebrating the magisterial scholarly work of another age. It is asserting, simply but emphatically, that no issue is more crucial to the country today than the relations between the races—relevant to every aspect of American life—and that few matters of such moment are being discussed less candidly, less openly. Some, imagining that their sexual freedom is a faithful index of the country's twentieth-century liberation from Puritan and Victorian mores, little realize how reticent and confused they have become on all manner of other more sensitive subjects. Race has become America's forbidden theme, with "bell curves" and other such nonsense substituting for serious discussion of real national and international problems. It is well to be reminded that no study of race relations in the United States, comparable to Myrdal's, has been published since 1944, though the problems that Myrdal and his colleagues addressed more than half a century ago—moral, economic, social, and political—may be more acute today than they were when the Carnegie Corporation commissioned its inquiry in the summer of 1937.

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It is extraordinary that there has been no successor study to that of Myrdal, that no foundation or corporate group has to this date recognized the need for a fundamental reinvestigation of what is incontestably the most serious problem that plagues American society today. The Myrdal study, undertaken in the midst of the country's worst economic depression in history, called for collaboration between a foreign scholar, little known in the United States when he started his work, and a remarkable group of American social scientific colleagues, black and white, who gave him a great deal more than information, allowing him to witness and describe a scene that had no precise parallel anywhere in Europe.

As Walter A. Jackson makes abundantly clear in *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938–1987,* American social scientists had made full and elaborate investigations into the nature of race relations in the United States many years before Gunnar Myrdal arrived to take charge of the ambitious study commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation. Myrdal, indeed, profited enormously from the work of these scholars, moving substantially beyond them, however, in the kinds of recommendations he made. A political activist himself, he did not come with the conviction that all social scientific inquiry had to be value neutral, that the scholar's first obligation was to avoid making public policy recommendations, that there was some positive advantage in not entering into the political arena.[1]

Coming from a European tradition where social science was expected to serve political and social ends—which did not mean that it had to be ideological or biased—Myrdal shared few of the American social scientists' beliefs that objectivity, in the manner of the natural sciences, ought to be the scholar's first responsibility. For Myrdal, the paradigms of the natural sciences did not provide the intellectual models that he felt compelled to adopt or imitate. Many American scholars who had written on the tangled and contentious issue of race relations refused to think of themselves as social reformers. For them, such an attribution would have been no distinction at all. They aspired to do something more difficult and more serious, to carry on as uninvolved scholars—latter-day monks of a sort, ascetics—who simply consulted the evidence and reported their findings to the community of scholars.

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One of the great philanthropic institutions of the day, the Carnegie Corporation, founded in 1911 and still carrying on in certain of the traditions set by Andrew Carnegie, knowing the difference between philanthropy and charity, but at the same time seeing no fundamental conflict between its commitment to the pursuit of knowledge and active social engagement, saw the possibility of creating a unique niche for itself by initiating a scholarly study of American race relations. That such a body should have accepted the obligation to concern itself with race, knowing the incendiary character of the issues involved, that in the end it should have expended well over $300,000 in doing so—a figure comparable to several millions in 1994 dollars—suggests something of the importance the President of Carnegie, Frederick Keppel, and his trustees attached to the race project.

The proposal for such a study had come as early as 1935, originally from Newton D. Baker, a Carnegie trustee who had served as Mayor of Cleveland and Secretary of War in the Wilson administration, who knew more than many of his colleagues about the complexities of race in a society recently tested in the crucible of war. Keppel, while hospitable to the idea, believed that the race question was so "charged with emotion" that no American scholar could be entrusted to provide the principal intellectual focus for such an inquiry. Almost a century after the greatest foreign observer, Alexis de Tocqueville, came to write about the American democracy, Keppel launched a search to discover a twentieth-century analogue to Tocqueville. While he might have wished for a latter-day James Bryce—thought by many to have been the second of the great nineteenth-century commentators on the United States—Keppel knew that scholars coming from Europe's imperial centers, France or Great Britain, would be unacceptable in the America of the 1930s. As he explained in the "Foreword" to the Myrdal volume,

> . . .since the emotional factor affects the Negroes no less than the whites, the search was limited to countries of high intellectual and scholarly standards but with no background or traditions of imperialism which might lessen the confidence of the Negroes in the United States as to the complete impartiality of the study and the validity of its findings.[2]

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Keppel and his colleagues, who might have been caricatured by a later generation as well-born, affluent white Protestant males, with little firsthand knowledge of either the black bourgeoisie or the working class that had already made Harlem a near-black enclave in New York, who knew even less about conditions below the Mason-Dixon line, their birthplaces and political experience notwithstanding, were concerned to produce an accurate and objective study that would find favor among whites and blacks, in the South but also in the North. Because 75 percent of Afro-Americans were still living in the South at the time, they looked for a man prepared to school himself in the very special conditions that prevailed in that part of the country. In the late 1930s, to study blacks in America was to study the South. However, it was not a regional expertise that they were searching for; as Keppel explained, they hoped to discover "someone with a fresh mind, uninfluenced by traditional attitudes or by earlier conclusions."[3] Given these conditions, particularly those that excluded scholars from the so-called imperial countries of Europe, their search naturally led them to look for a scholar in Switzerland or Scandinavia.

In the end, they settled on Gunnar Myrdal, a young Swedish economist who had spent a year in the United States as a Rockefeller Fellow in 1929–1930, witnessing both the Wall Street crash and the beginning of the world economic depression. That Myrdal held a chair as professor at the University of Stockholm, was an economic adviser to the Swedish Government, and was a member of the Swedish Senate, were all cited by Keppel as obvious qualifications for the arduous task the foundation had assigned him. Given Myrdal's youth—he was not yet forty—and that his experience with the study of race was negligible, it became important to dwell on his public affairs credentials. That the Carnegie invitation came at the time when Myrdal was preparing to come for his second visit to the United States, having been invited to give the prestigious Godkin Lectures at Harvard, suggested that he was beginning to be recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as a public-spirited individual whose reputation as a social economist had already given him a certain renown.

Keppel, careful and diplomatic at all times, knew how limited Myrdal's familiarity with the race issue was, why it was essential that he, in his capacity as president of Carnegie, pay tribute to the

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scholarly work of American social scientists who had made race a matter of great concern to themselves. If, as he explained, there "was no lack of competent scholars in the United States who were deeply interested in the problem and had already devoted themselves to its study,"[4] this did not invalidate the foundation's wish to vest the direction of its ambitious study in a foreign scholar whose objectivity and independence could be relied on. Myrdal was expected to recruit a team of experts, of both races, whom he would consult, who would assist him in his research. It went without saying that he would seek to avail himself of the best talent in the country, wherever he found it. Myrdal learned very early that many of the most talented were young men like himself, engaged in historical, psychological, anthropological, and economic research on various aspects of race relations. Many, with academic bases in the Negro colleges and universities of the South—at Howard or Fisk, for example—lived in a scholarly world and published in academic journals scarcely known to those who inhabited the Ivy League, but familiar to the small numbers who pursued comparable social scientific research in certain of the private and public universities of the South and Middle West, at Chicago, Northwestern, Wisconsin, and North Carolina, to name only a few.

America had developed a strong social science tradition, centered in a handful of universities; issues of culture, class, race, and prejudice were not neglected subjects in depression-ridden America. Indeed, when Myrdal came to publish his 1,483-page book, the list of books, pamphlets, periodicals, and other material referred to in *An American Dilemma* covered some thirty-six pages in very small print. The social sciences, as practiced in the United States, might still, by certain standards, lack the theoretical distinction of the best of Europe's scholarship, but an even casual study of authors, titles, and publication sites suggested that the United States, in respect at least to the study of race relations, was in no way laggard, simply following in the wake of European research. Myrdal came to a country where he had much to learn but also a great deal to give.

An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy—to give the work its full title—was not the labor of an accomplished journalist who simply transcribed his many conversations, or of a scholar who read widely but stayed tucked away in a library. Rather, it was the work of a young scholar who took

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certain risks by traveling in a segregated South in the company of a radical young black political scientist, Ralph Bunche, who was to achieve international eminence and the Nobel Peace Prize some years later, who, with others, engaged in constant dialogue with his Swedish colleague. Myrdal depended heavily on the investigations of others, and indeed gave several, in very difficult economic times, their first opportunity to do research and publish. The group of scholars, of both races, some established, others barely known at the time, cited by Myrdal in his "Preface" included, among many others, Margaret Brenman, Sterling Brown, Barbara Burks, Allison Davis, J. G. St. Clair Drake, E. Franklin Frazier, Melville J. Herskovits, Charles S. Johnson, Otto Klineberg, Ira DeA. Reid, Edward Shils, and Louis Wirth, not to mention Kenneth Clark, Arnold M. Rose, Samuel Stouffer, and the social statistician who accompanied him from Sweden, Richard Sterner.

For those familiar with the work of the greatest number of these scholars, there can be no surprise that they did not always agree among themselves, even on fundamental issues, or that they did not all look upon the final product with the same degree of enthusiasm. If it was Myrdal's task to learn from all of them, he understood very early that there was no way for him to compromise or bridge the differences between a Bunche and a Herskovits—friends though they might be—the latter recognized to be one of America's leading anthropologists, the former a young unknown professor at Howard. Herskovits, with his firm belief in the importance of African culture in shaping the mind-set and habits of American blacks, wishing to develop in the United States an "interdisciplinary enterprise with a comparative perspective,"[5] was not likely to persuade another of Myrdal's gifted collaborators, E. Franklin Frazier, who chose to see American black culture and life in a very different light. The intellectual disputes in the team recruited by Myrdal could never be charted along simple racial lines. Blacks differed with blacks; both differed with whites, or at least certain among them; and all had a number of reservations about their leader, and they were not contained in the jaundiced characterization of Myrdal as the "Swedish Simon Legree."[6] Those words, uttered by the youthful Bunche, himself a driven man of herculean energy, told as much about the frenetic pace of the project as it did about the perpetual demands of

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its foreign leader, a good friend of Bunche who never ceased to admire what he perceived to be his independence and courage.

As Walter Jackson makes clear in what is today the best account of the intellectual and methodological differences between those who served as advisers, but also among those who were frozen out of the Carnegie enterprise, issues relating to integration and assimilation figured prominently for a number of Myrdal's colleagues, were almost secondary for others. While some wished principally to investigate the question of race relations, being relatively unconcerned with formulating recommendations calculated to influence public policy, others cared deeply about the conditions that existed, finding them abominable, wishing only to change them.[7] Within the Myrdal team, even before World War II created yet new fissures, there were substantial differences about what the book should say, how it should be said, and who its intended audience might be. Questions that have plagued a good number of the more limited studies on race relations published since *An American Dilemma* existed in an acute form even then.

Myrdal presided over a contentious crew that did not simply defer to his opinions. Yet, he was incontestably chief of the enterprise, and it is not insignificant that when the book appeared in 1944, he was sole author, though the title page carried the meaningful additional phrase, "with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose." The book was Myrdal's, though parts of it were written by other hands. Samuel Stouffer, for example, had been substantially involved, particularly during the periods when Myrdal was absent from the United States, making his perilous way across the submarine-infested Atlantic to his home and family in Sweden. *An American Dilemma,* a unique description of American race relations during the era of the Depression, carried the story into the first years of World War II. In describing a segregated South, still living in the shadow of the Civil War, a booming North, gradually being released from some of the worst effects of the Depression—with blacks in great number flocking into its cities in search of work, as they had also done during World War I—American society was still characterized by its poverty and want, perhaps most conspicuous among blacks but common also to many whites. Whether describing the lives of black men and women, sharecroppers in the South, or menial factory workers in the North, Myrdal criticized a

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set of economic and social conditions that he found offensive, that bound millions to intolerable conditions of penury. His more determined concern, however, was to explain how the United States had come to betray its own founding principles, accepting that great numbers of its citizens should live under inhumane conditions, at variance with the country's stated ideals.

Committed by its Enlightenment, Protestant, Christian, and English legal values to what Myrdal called the American Creed, he saw this idealism as the cement that held the disparate nation together. Myrdal knew that the moral obligations imposed by the Creed had been flouted for centuries. Black men and women were denied the fundamental liberties guaranteed by the founding myths of the republic; even in the midst of war, with all the promises implicit in the Atlantic Charter, blacks were denied the freedom and dignity they were entitled to as citizens of a democratic republic. What sense did it make for the United States to insist on its democratic principles when it treated millions in the way that it did? Myrdal, the citizen of a neutral state, Sweden, ashamed at what his country felt compelled to do to keep Hitler's armies out, allowing the Germans to transport men and military equipment across its territory to Nazi-occupied Norway, looked for a higher level of performance from an America at war with Nazi Germany. He wrote *An American Dilemma* in some part, at least, as a call for the United States to take seriously the democratic creed which formed such an integral part of its civil religion, never so denominated. Myrdal, with all the authority that a long italicized paragraph could provide, made his principal purpose explicit when he wrote:

> The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on. This is the central viewpoint of this treatise. Though our study includes economic, social, and political race relations, at bottom our problem is the moral dilemma of the American—the conflict between his moral valuations on various levels of consciousness and generality. The "American Dilemma," referred to in the title of this book, is the ever-raging conflict between, on the one hand, the valuations preserved on the general plane which we shall call the "American Creed," where the American thinks, talks, and acts under the influence of high national and Christian precepts, and, on the other hand, the valuations on specific

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> planes of individual and group living, where personal and local interests; economic, social, and sexual jealousies; considerations of community prestige and conformity; group prejudice against particular persons or types of people; and all sorts of miscellaneous wants, impulses, and habits dominate his outlook. . . .The Negro problem is an integral part of. . .the whole complex of problems in the larger American civilization. It cannot be treated in isolation.[8]

If *An American Dilemma* had been only a jeremiad, a call to white men to abandon their racism, it would have greatly embarrassed those in the Carnegie Corporation who had funded the study. Given Myrdal's own interests, it was inconceivable that he would wish to write or give his name only to an elaborate bill of complaints. The work, in fact, existed on several planes; on one level, it could be read as a warning to Americans of the dangers they ran by continuing to ignore the injustices inflicted on blacks; riots and worse were a very real possibility if conditions continued as they were, and Myrdal intended for his book to sound a tocsin. On another level, it was an analysis of black society and black culture, as Myrdal and his associates interpreted them, basing their views largely on what they had witnessed in the South, informed also by what they had learned from reading the copious literature on race relations extant at the time in the United States.

The uniqueness of the study is admirably captured by Walter Jackson:

> In contrast to many American social scientists of the period, Myrdal bluntly and forcefully condemned racial oppression, particularly segregation and discrimination in the South. Totally absent from "An American Dilemma" was the vague rhetoric of racial adjustment, deference to southern white folkways, and silence or equivocation on the social equality issue that had characterized so many foundation-sponsored studies of black-white relations. Yet Myrdal did not engage in the kind of crude South-baiting that had awakened regional defensiveness in the past. His status as a foreign observer, his emphasis on the American creed as a functioning part of the nation's culture, and his treatment of race relations in an international context during wartime allowed him to avoid the appearance of singling out the South for censure.[9]

If Myrdal expected that his even-handedness—his avoiding some of the more conventional denunciations of Southern white practices

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along with his studied unwillingness to sentimentalize any aspect of black life and experience, refusing in any way to ignore the iniquities created by the nation's failure to practice its Creed—would provide him with protection against certain kinds of criticism, he was proved wrong. While the greatest number of reviewers were effusive in their praise, others were more reserved. Convention dictated that some, cited by the author for their help, should not choose to review it at all. While Lewis Gannett in *The New York Herald Tribune* compared the work with that of Tocqueville and Bryce, and *Time* made the same comparison a fortnight later, the reviews in *The New York Times, The New Republic,* and *The Saturday Review* were no less favorable, with reviewers, white and black, of the intellectual distinction of Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Lynd, Henry Steele Commager, J. Saunders Redding, E. Franklin Frazier, and the "dean of American Negro studies," W. E. B. Du Bois, vying with each other to praise the work, speaking of its seminal importance. While such praise was common, it was by no means universal, particularly among Southern reviewers, including a number who might, because of their liberal inclinations, have been expected to react more favorably.[10]

The work, because of its theoretical as well as its empirical qualities, could not fail to attract the attention of those partial to such inquiry. Sociologists, psychologists, historians, and economists felt an obligation to comment on Myrdal's methods and findings. Some, like the young Robert Merton, for example, expressed serious reservations about Myrdal's American Creed, in which he had placed such great stock. Writing a major essay on Myrdal's work in 1949, Merton thought the theory might be "seriously misleading for social policy and social science." In his view, if people violated the Creed sufficiently, those violations became themselves what he called an "institutionalized evasion of institutional norms," thereby effectively minimizing the power of the Creed. Myrdal, however unwittingly, in Merton's opinion, had exaggerated its influence.[11]

Gordon Allport, the senior social psychologist at Harvard, whose work *The Nature of Prejudice* enjoyed enormous renown at the time of its publication in 1954, seemed more sympathetic to the principal argument in the Myrdal tome. For Allport, the American democratic ethos carried very great weight; it was, in his view, a mistake to underestimate its power. As he argued, from the perspec-

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tive of a psychologist concerned with stigma and intolerance, "the quickest way to deflate a bigot was to show him that his prejudice violated the Christian-democratic creed." In a letter to Kenneth Clark, written in 1953, Allport said, "People really know that segregation is un-American, even the masses in the South know it." Allport believed that if the Supreme Court took a position against segregation, that decision would eventually carry the day. This, however, did not make him at all sanguine about what interracial contact would do to reduce prejudice; the conditions for that to happen were substantially more complex than those outlined by Myrdal.[12]

If traditional academics were on the whole overwhelmingly favorable in their comments, very reluctant to find fault with what they took to be a serious work of scholarship, this was not the position of those who proudly proclaimed their intellectual allegiances to be on the Left. The young Marxist historian, Herbert Aptheker, published a short book—essentially a pamphlet—on Myrdal's many inadequacies in 1946, and reprinted it in 1977. Entitled *The Negro People in America: A Critique of Gunnar Myrdal's An American Dilemma,* Aptheker, like other of Myrdal's critics, found flaws in his historical interpretation. He and others criticized what they believed to be his failure to give sufficient attention to the economic factors that perpetuated the system of discrimination and injustice, and not only in the South. Myrdal, though a prominent Social Democrat in Sweden, had not, in their view, been sufficiently attentive to the ways in which the capitalist system brought oppression in its wake, inevitably. Scarcely less serious, in Aptheker's opinion, was Myrdal's failure to represent and portray black culture correctly; the proposition that blacks were essentially passive, incapable of resistance, offended Aptheker. Myrdal, in his view, simply did not know or understand the strengths of the black culture.[13]

Doxey Wilkerson, one of Myrdal's collaborators in *An American Dilemma,* who chose to make no mention of that now embarrassing fact, wrote the introduction to Aptheker's book, dismissing Myrdal's work as "corporation-financed" and "pseudo-scientific." According to Wilkerson, "The Negro question has now become one of the most crucial and fundamental issues confronting our nation. Not only are the lives and liberties of fourteen million Negro

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citizens in dire jeopardy but the fascist pattern of terror by which they are oppressed threatens to spread and destroy the freedom of all Americans." Black oppression, in Wilkerson's view, was profitable; hence it was maintained, particularly at those times when it was threatened. The "long, gradual never-ending process of 'education'"—the education of the white majority—was not what Wilkerson was prepared patiently to wait for. Myrdal's book, in Wilkerson's view, was an "ideological monstrosity," and had found its corrective in the work of Aptheker.[14]

Whether Myrdal was greatly disconcerted by such criticism from the Left it is difficult to know, but one may presume that the exaggeration of its language provided him with a certain immunity to the barbs so liberally issued. The more significant fact, certainly, is that the Carnegie Corporation itself, his sponsor and funder—its officers and trustees—never really seemed to take pleasure in Myrdal's accomplishment. Keppel had died in 1943, before the book was published. Others in Carnegie, who had helped significantly with the project, including the all-important Donald Young, who was later to serve as President of the Russell Sage Foundation, were surprisingly circumspect, saying almost nothing in public. Given that Young was advising the War Department on race issues at the time, his reticence might be explained by the nature of his war service, except for the fact that in both his correspondence and the oral history he prepared for deposit at Columbia University, he told another less flattering story. Young believed that Myrdal had not "made any contribution to the understanding of race relations. . .in a scholarly sense."[15] This, for him, was the supreme offense.

Others, who also chose not to comment in public—Melville Herskovitz, Samuel Stouffer, and Edward Thorndike, to name only three of the more prominent advisers—had other reservations about the book, which they circulated privately. A number of individuals who are alive today, who knew these or other of Myrdal's collaborators, would be in a position to tell more about their misgivings. Whether such recollections would in fact throw light on why the Carnegie Corporation chose not to celebrate Myrdal's achievement, it is difficult to say. One might be left with nothing more than what Waldemar Nielson, in his not very flattering portrayal of the large American foundations, chose to write. Nielson, noting that Walter Jessup, Keppel's successor as the Carnegie president, "entirely di-

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vorced himself from the book," thought it strange that while "there have been many examples of a foundation turning its back on its failures," in this instance "the Carnegie Corporation turned its back on a triumph."[16] Why?

Myrdal, and those who had worked with him, not least the young black scholars whom he had engaged, expected publication of the book to lead to greater research opportunities. This did not happen. Walter Jackson states the matter very concisely: "One of the effects of the Myrdal project was to dry up foundation money for major studies of race relations and of Afro-American communities and culture for the next twenty years."[17] The story of why this happened has yet to be written—Jackson's own very brief account, with its description of how Young wrote to the foundations urging them not to engage in further research on the subject, but to focus instead on the "point of contact between groups, such as at the factory, in the store, at school, in the city street, or on the bus," does not begin to tell the tale of why foundation funding for fundamental research on race relations dried up in the years after World War II, and has never been seriously renewed since then.[18]

A far more important story, however, is the political one, dealing with how Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower perceived Civil Rights issues, why their administrations acted in the way they did in the years from 1933 to 1960. Franklin Roosevelt's own attitudes and policies in respect to racial issues have been frequently explored, but a new generation of historians may be expected to look more closely and more critically at how he managed his affairs in this very sensitive area. Roosevelt, considered by most to be a friend of the blacks—any photograph of the crowds waiting along the railroad tracks to watch the train bearing his body from Georgia to Washington, D.C., or weeping in the streets of the capital as the cortege passed by, tells its own story—was sufficiently sensitive to Congressional opinion to know that it would not respond positively to major proposals to enact Civil Rights legislation. Dependent on Southern Democratic Senators and Representatives, whose number and seniority alone guaranteed their influence, Roosevelt knew what kinds of support he might expect of such men, why he would be foolish even to attempt to challenge them in matters where he could not hope to win their votes.

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Just as he carefully calibrated his foreign policy innovations to take account of what a suspicious, recalcitrant Congress would in the end approve, so he took great pains to avoid repeating in domestic policy the kinds of mistakes he made in his Supreme Court-packing intervention, which cost him so dearly and ended so disastrously. In proposing legislation calculated to assist those in difficulty, men and women at risk in many segments of American society—refusing to single out blacks or any other minority—Roosevelt showed characteristic political acumen. Determined to build a new kind of Democratic party, dependent on the support of constituencies, ethnic, racial, and social, not previously tied very securely to the party, Roosevelt pursued a tactic intended to make his New Deal reforms a permanent feature of the American political landscape.

Developing, however inchoately, new concepts of social welfare, suited to the depressed economic conditions common in his time, that so adversely affected the overwhelming majority of the country's citizens, Roosevelt catered to a working-class America stricken by unemployment, whose wages were low, who had few advantages over the poor farmers who sought to scratch a meagre living from their inadequate holdings. That Eleanor Roosevelt, by her own highly publicized actions, made the President appear to be the friend of the common man—the phrase obviously included women and blacks, among others—showed something more than White House solicitude for the obviously disadvantaged citizens of a country still reeling from the effects of a world economic catastrophe. It expressed the capacity of both to understand certain political necessities, common to a time when most American citizens lived close to the margin, when their conditions of life made the building of political coalitions difficult. In a society where so many were in fact competing for so little, the potentialities for conflict between hostile groups, ethnic and racial, each striving for its own share of an inadequate economic pie, had to be counteracted by making it appear that all were in the same boat, that none was being treated preferentially.

Now that we know a great deal more about the gravity of Roosevelt's illnesses, how serious indeed was the deterioration in his health by the spring of 1944—facts artfully concealed at the time, scarcely figuring even in the presidential election campaign of

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that year—one can only guess at what would have happened had Roosevelt died in April 1944 rather than in April 1945.[19] Had his successor been Henry Wallace, purportedly much more partial to pressing for Civil Rights legislation, there is no reason to believe that major new Civil Rights laws would have been enacted. The Vice President's reputation in the South was never very high; indeed, it was one of several reasons why he was passed over for the vice presidential nomination in 1944. The introduction of major reforms, of the kind suggested by Myrdal in *An American Dilemma,* required something more than support from the White House. It called for changes within Congress, within the public consciousness, and nothing that happened during World War II suggested that such changes were in fact taking place. While Northerners, dispatched to Southern army camps—the influence exercised by Southern Senators and Representatives guaranteed that there would be many military installations in the region—might look with surprise (or even contempt) at what they saw, the indignities suffered by black men and women in a segregated society, this did not translate into the change of heart that Myrdal had called for.

This became very obvious during Harry Truman's more than seven years in the White House. Although Truman tried, very early, to create a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, he failed to win Congressional approval. Indeed, it was only a series of racial incidents and lynchings in the South that made Truman aware that a number of his inherited New Deal constituencies were restive, demanding something more than what had satisfied them during Roosevelt's time in office. In creating the President's Committee on Civil Rights, Truman did what Roosevelt had refused to do after the race riots of 1943. Led by Charles Wilson, the President of General Electric, it was comprised of the kinds of men and women who at the time regularly served on such bipartisan commissions. With representatives of labor and industry, it included two white liberal Southerners and two blacks, women as well as men, with a Catholic bishop, a Jewish rabbi, and the presiding Episcopal bishop joining the President of Dartmouth and one of the country's distinguished civil liberties attorneys, Morris Ernst, as well as several other presumably influential individuals whose reputation for probity could be counted on.[20]

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Their report, "To Secure these Rights," submitted in October 1947, might have come straight out of Myrdal's own work. In no fundamental way did it contradict what Myrdal had said just three years earlier. For the President's Committee, "the American heritage of freedom and equality," as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, legitimated the country's democratic traditions, the American Creed that had so preoccupied Myrdal, that he knew was being violated every day. The blacks were not the only minority suffering abuse. If Roosevelt had sought to provide social and economic protection to many, rarely choosing to distinguish among those who would purportedly profit from his New Deal legislation, the men and women who advised Truman sought to do the same in the field of Civil Rights. Discrimination, unacknowledged by those who did not experience it, was rife in America, affecting many more than just black men and women in the South or elsewhere. Catholics, Jews, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, and others were also suffering indignities and injustices that were intolerable. It was neither economically advantageous nor morally safe for the country to allow conditions of this sort to persist.

Like Myrdal, the President's Commission on Civil Rights saw the moral issue as central. Knowing that the country was much preoccupied with what was increasingly perceived to be a growing Soviet menace, they argued that the lynchings in the South gave "excellent propaganda ammunition for Communist agents." More importantly, because they understood how the American "democratic ideal" was being threatened by practices that shamed the nation's claim to being free and just, they insisted that the country recognize how its failure to live up to its ideals might cause it to lose out in its struggle with the Soviet enemy. The stakes were too high for the country to go on with business as usual. The Committee's recommendations included almost all the Civil Rights laws and regulations that were adopted in time, including, in Jackson's admirable summary, "an antilynching law, an FEPC, abolition of the poll tax, legislation against discrimination in voter registration, an end to segregation in the armed forces, legislation against segregation in interstate transportation, and a cutoff of federal funds to any public or private agency practicing discrimination or segregation." The Committee saw as their ultimate objective the "elimination of segregation,

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based on race, color, creed, or national origin, from American life."[21]

Congress, in 1948, had no interest in such a program, and Truman recognized what his Missouri upbringing ought to have told him—race was an issue too sensitive to be dealt with in so enlightened and revolutionary a manner, even when global and domestic advantages could be adduced. It was only the votes at the Democratic party convention—in a platform battle led by Hubert Humphrey—that produced a Civil Rights plank that wholly incorporated the President's Committee on Civil Rights recommendations. That Truman chose to run on this plank, that he was forced to compete not only with his Republican party adversary, Thomas Dewey, but also with both Henry Wallace and Strom Thurmond, in the end garnering more votes from blacks than Roosevelt had ever managed to secure in his four electoral battles, suggested a propensity for risk-taking on the President's part that could never be thought common. Winning by slim margins the electoral votes of several crucial states—California, Illinois, and Ohio—Truman understood what the black vote had made possible, his triumph over Dewey. Blacks and whites, working together, had given him his victory. Truman knew this, but it gave him no additional leverage with Congress, still firmly opposed to most of the measures white liberals and blacks believed to be necessary for the country. In 1953, when Truman left office, his greatest achievement in the area of Civil Rights was his desegregation of the armed forces, achieved through executive order.[22]

In the Eisenhower years, no effort was made to introduce legislation that would in any significant way incorporate the ideas of *An American Dilemma*. Still, the most important event of the period, certainly as relating to Civil Rights, was the *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, handed down by the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954. Chief Justice Earl Warren, in citing the writings of Myrdal, Frazier, Clark, and other social scientists to explain why segregated schools damaged black children, and why they could no longer be countenanced, gave Myrdal's magnum opus an importance it had never previously enjoyed. Although the Court asked that desegregation "proceed with all deliberate speed," it refused to set deadlines. The President, for his part, simply remained silent, and Southern opposition to the Court decision gained

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momentum. For most of the next decade, certainly during the last six years of Eisenhower's presidency, the issue played itself out principally on the television screens of the country, much more than in the courts or in the Congress. Still, the Myrdal idea was alive, legitimated by the highest court in the land, given its most important political support by the growing reputation of the black leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., as evidenced in his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.[23]

The story of how Kennedy was led, after very substantial hesitation, to embrace the cause of Civil Rights, responding in terms familiar to any reader of Myrdal, has been frequently told. So, also, the violent events that occurred in Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, that caused national and international consternation, made perhaps even more dramatic by the peaceful Civil Rights marches initiated by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the violence they provoked, led Kennedy to make proposals he would not have considered when he first entered the White House. Walter Jackson captures the significance of this epic spring:

> In his [Kennedy's] framing of the civil rights issue as a moral question, in his conception of the black struggle as a demand for individual civil rights, in his emphasis upon the doctrine of equality of opportunity, and in his assumption that skin color, rather than culture, was the only thing that separated black from white Americans, Kennedy faithfully reiterated the liberal orthodoxy that Myrdal had helped put in place twenty years earlier. His use of quantitative evidence and reference to the class and caste system revealed the extent to which social science ideas had penetrated the consciousness of educated Americans. The president's warnings of violence if nothing were done, and his emphasis upon the international implications of domestic racial inequality, and reference to the Nazi "master race" theory all recalled the conclusions of *An American Dilemma*.[24]

Never had a book based on research sponsored by an American foundation, written in a quite different historical era, enjoyed such repute, or been given so belated and cordial recognition. Never, indeed, did the leading foundations, so long shying away from the race issue, whether or not out of a concern to follow the advice of those not wholly enchanted with what Myrdal and his associates had written, move so rapidly into reverse gear, starting again to make funds available for the study of race. However, there was

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little inclination to do in 1963 or 1964 what the Carnegie Corporation had done so courageously in the late 1930s, making a clear commitment to the importance of scholarly investigation of what were incontestably sensitive issues, none more complex perhaps than those that touched black-white relations. No new Myrdal, foreign or American, was commissioned to launch an in-depth study of the country's race problems after 1963; no such study exists even today when so much has changed both in the country and in the world.

It may be useful to reflect on why this is so. In one sense, the reason is fairly obvious. Though 1963–1965 was a tragic time in the history of the country—not only because of the assassination of yet another American president but also because of the riots in Watts and elsewhere—it was also a time of hope for those who imagined that a new day might at last be dawning in respect to race relations in the United States. Lyndon Johnson, with his extraordinary sensitivity to political currents, recognizing how the assassination might be used to press Congress to pass Civil Rights legislation—representing it as a memorial to the slain president—knew how to use his large Democratic party majorities in both houses to insist on those objectives being realized at once. Resorting to television, Johnson intuited what his "bully pulpit" in the White House provided; and he was not disinclined to use it. This, however, did not satisfy his insatiable appetite for change. At the Howard University 1965 commencement, before the Watts riots, Johnson promised even more substantial changes; in his view, providing equal opportunity was only the beginning; the ultimate objective had to be a society of equals.[25]

At this moment, then, when the liberal values reflected in *An American Dilemma* seemed to be carrying the day, at least in Washington, *Dædalus* published the first of two volumes on "The American Negro"—almost the last time when the term Negro could be used without giving offense.[26] In no sense of the word could these volumes compare with what Myrdal had done, but they had one distinction that Myrdal could not claim, a Foreword from the President of the United States. Brief and eloquent, it expressed perfectly the optimism of that moment. No one reading the President in *Dædalus* could have anticipated the events that would follow, that would lead to the shattering of the alliance between

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blacks and whites, so critical in producing the Civil Rights legislative revolution of the 1960s. The *Dædalus* issues carried any number of warnings, but these were scarcely heeded. It was much more convenient to believe, along with many in the mass media and on university campuses, years later, that Johnson's errors in pursuing the war in Vietnam rather than his much-touted "war on poverty" destroyed his credibility and in the end his administration. All such analysis, however, did not explain why so many blacks, outraged by conditions in their urban ghettos, suddenly took to the streets, what the effects of their violence on white opinion proved to be. Nor did they consider why Myrdal's collaborator, Ralph Bunche, chose to represent Watts as an "unspeakable tragedy," the "bitterest fruit of the black ghetto."[27]

When Johnson wrote his Foreword to the first *Dædalus* issue on "The American Negro," Watts had already happened. Johnson said:

> It will not be enough to provide better schools for Negro children, to inspire them in their studies, if there are no decent jobs waiting for them after graduation. It will not be enough to open up job opportunities, if the Negro must remain trapped in a jungle of tenements and shanties. If we are to have peace at home, if we are to speak with one honest voice in the world—indeed, if our country is to live with its conscience—we must affect every dimension of the Negro's life for the better.[28]

If such words were intended to calm rebellious spirits, to inject some reason into an increasingly overheated dialogue, if they spoke in the idiom of Myrdal, they failed to have their intended effect. The riots of the summer of 1966 in Chicago, Cleveland, Brooklyn, Omaha, Baltimore, San Francisco, and Jacksonville continued into the next hot summer, with even more disastrous loss of life in Newark and Detroit. Among blacks, there was increasing talk not only of Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time,* a work of 1963, but of Black Power and black anger. The "politics of insult" became the characteristic politics of the day, with terrible consequences for a nation understandably hostile to those who preached or practiced violence. Old political alliances were broken; new ones—pledged to fundamental social reform—were never made.

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While former Myrdal associates like Bunche might choose to characterize Black Power negatively, as a "sloganized, grossly oversimplified exploitation of the disillusionment of Negro Americans. . .which would have neither meaning nor impact without the ghettos," others were less certain, and more importantly, less ready to speak out.[29] If Bunche dismissed Black Power Separatism as "racist and escapist," believing that only the breakup of the black ghettos could provide security to the nation—some version of what President Johnson's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the so-called Kerner Commission) also recommended—there was thought to be too great ambiguity in all such proposals; they were considered by many to be hopelessly utopian.[30] Indeed, as voices were raised on every side, and as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in April 1968 served to create yet new uncertainties about the future relation of the races, it became increasingly difficult to speak candidly on any of the issues that had once concerned Myrdal. He, like so many of his associates, receded into obscurity, made more painful this time by the fact that so many of the issues they had originally raised were still so largely unresolved.

Foundation and other funding for large-scale scholarly studies of race, for the second time in the century, rapidly dried up. As support for urban studies disappeared, one more casualty of the increased determination to avoid grandiose thinking—not to make the giant or utopian leaps common to an earlier time—race ceased to be a subject of serious social scientific thinking. While arms control studies, of very great scholarly sophistication, continued to command foundation and governmental support, the violence of the inner city, and the hazards posed by it to the larger society, became the subject increasingly of journalism. Scholars receded from a field they had so recently been heavily committed to.

In the new Republican presidential era that opened with the election of Richard Nixon, that continued with only two brief Democratic party intervals, when Jimmy Carter sat in the White House and when Bill Clinton took over in 1993, the silences and reticences of politicians and others, black and white, on issues of race became positively ominous. Safety lay in saying little, in doing nothing. If the "war on poverty" concluded with neither victory nor celebration, if it receded as just one more rhetorical invention, characteristic of a Cold War political climate, the more significant

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fact was that the urban ghetto ceased to be a subject which commanded public attention. It receded from general political discourse, which did not mean that individual acts of violence, so graphic in their own gruesome way, held no fascination for those who continued to receive their daily diet of news from television, radio, or the more agitated tabloid press. The American urban ghetto, with its burned-out buildings and drug raids, became a standard and recognizable icon in the country's culture by the early 1970s. If public segregated facilities had disappeared from the South, the images of a million New Yorkers seeking respite from the summer heat by sleeping in salubrious Central Park spoke of a depression era long since forgotten. This was not the new and more prosperous America that bolted its doors and feared to go out into the night.

Individuals were no longer prepared to speak candidly on the conditions that existed, not even on the errors committed in what many considered to have been the halfhearted efforts made to create an integrated society. As for proposed remedies to the social and economic conditions that made the cities of America a national disgrace—so regarded by the whole world, and not only for its crime and violence—all this seemed to be beyond repair. While some spoke heatedly of "political correctness," discovering it in the colleges and universities of the country, another more insidious kind of "political correctness" insinuated itself into the country. Its name was "evasiveness." The country scarcely knew what to do to remedy the abuses that the mass media constantly alluded to. A kind of paralysis descended on the country, not least because so few knew what could be done, and even fewer thought there would be an advantage in speaking of their doubts too openly.

The year 1965 was the last moment when an Editor of *Dædalus* might wish to have a president of the United States express himself on the subject of race. If the 1965 and 1966 *Dædalus* issues sold well, if they brought together white and black scholars, men and women of very disparate views who were unafraid to voice their hopes and fears, they had no decisive influence, not even when bound together and sold as a book by Houghton Mifflin, edited by one of the country's most prominent black psychologists, Kenneth Clark, and the internationally renowned American sociologist, Talcott Parsons. While the individual articles might command respect, their

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common theme no longer enjoyed the kind of attention that had been given Myrdal's work when the Chief Justice handed down his historic opinion. Not even the photographs, imaginatively presented by Bruce Davidson, carried a message able to sway opinion. So, while the essay by Daniel Patrick Moynihan on "Employment, Income, and the Ordeal of the Negro Family," which avoided some of the rhetoric he had used in another place that had generated such violent reactions—not least from those who imagined he had disparaged black culture and the black family—prefigured much later general discussion on the crucial importance of parenting, his suggestion that the "fundamental problem is the position of the [black] male" did not provoke disagreement.[31] No one seemed offended by the suggestion; no one knew what to do about it.

If St. Clair Drake, one of the original Myrdal associates, called for a "radical shift in American values and simultaneous adjustments of economy and society," citing his former chief's belief that there must be "an unqualified commitment to provide every individual and every family with an adequate income as a matter of right," these sentiments simply reinforced the message that James Tobin, a future Nobel Laureate, was also concerned to make. For Tobin, as for several of the others, what the federal government chose to do would in very substantial part determine whether racial equality was achieved. That, in 1966–1967, still seemed to be a possibility. Or was it all a liberal chimera?[32]

James Q. Wilson came very close to saying so. He wrote:

> While it may be true that Negroes and whites have a common interest in ending unemployment, improving housing and education, and resisting technological displacement, a stable and enduring alliance to attain these objectives will not be easily achieved. The only major political mechanism by which poor whites and Negroes have in the past been brought into alliance—the big-city machine—is collapsing; except for a few large industrial unions, no substitute has yet appeared.[33]

Harold Fleming put the matter even more bluntly; if, as he believed, "the federal executive tends to innovate forcefully and effectively only in response to an evident sense of national urgency," it became important to accept the fact that

> no administration, however wisely or humanely led, is likely to initiate far-reaching action in the face of public indifference, to say

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> nothing of hostility. The quality of federal civil rights performance, then, depends directly on the ability of Negro Americans to dramatize their cause in such a way that it enlists the support of other influential segments of the society. Obvious though it may be, this conclusion has been explicitly rejected by some of the militant Negro leadership and is often ignored by others of both races.[34]

It was Oscar Handlin who threw yet other doubts on those who chose to remain euphoric, who imagined that the Civil Rights legislation had in fact produced a social revolution. Handlin, in very measured words, said: "Desegregation will not solve any of the important economic, social, and political problems of American life; it will only offer a starting point from which to confront them." He did not expect Negroes "to merge into the rest of the population in the next few decades"—many of the more radical blacks were insisting at the time that they had no interest to join what they saw as a putrifying white man's society—but Handlin saw no need to counter such argument. He was satisfied to remind his readers, black and white, liberal, conservative, and radical, that "Those who desire to eliminate every difference so that Americans will more nearly resemble each other, those who imagine that there is a main stream into which every element in the society will be swept, are deceived about the character of the country in which they live."[35]

Ralph Ellison, in very different terms, seemed to be saying almost the same thing. In the discussions that took place at the House of the Academy, Ellison intervened with a memorable statement, so different from what other black authors like James Baldwin were saying at the time. Ellison said:

> I defend the subculture, because I have to work out of it, because it is precious to me, because I believe it is a vital contributing part of the total culture. I do not think I want to deny that. If I did, then I would have to throw away my typewriter and become a sociologist. I also believe that the subculture and the larger culture are interrelated. I wish that we would dispense with this idea that we are begging to get *in* somewhere. The main stream is in oneself. The main stream of American literature is in me, even though I am a Negro, because I possess more of Mark Twain than many white writers do.[36]

The two *Dædalus* volumes numbered some 870 pages in total, somewhat fewer than *An American Dilemma*. Concerned with

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recruiting authors from both races, with acknowledging the contributions that could be made by scholars coming from quite disparate disciplines, whose object was to provide something other than a single set of recommendations—where intellectual differences might be aired, where candor was not at a discount—"The Negro American" sought to inspire a debate that would suggest how much had changed since World War II, since the overwhelming numbers of black men and women lived in the states of the former Confederacy, in the South. It presumed that there would be a growing debate in the country on race issues, and did not take into account the possibility that the debate was in fact coming to an end, that it was being adjourned to another day.[37] Interestingly, that day has still not arrived.

In the last two and a half decades, there have been no volumes comparable either to what Myrdal aspired to do, or what, with infinitely smaller resources and success, the American Academy managed to do in the mid-1960s, again, importantly, with the support of the Carnegie Corporation. Scholarship on race relations has not been in a very flourishing state. Journalism, with its contemporary penchant for investigative reporting, has found few compelling stories to tell about the relations between the races. Theory, never journalism's strongest suit, and in any case suspect, has been overtaken by discussion of inexpensive quack remedies—instant cures—for the country's many ills, including crime, teenage pregnancy, drug addiction, delinquency, and the like. Larger issues, relating to the city and its pathologies, the races, and their mutual recriminations and fears, are submerged in a politics that has become banal, interesting principally when it involves public or private scandal.

Myrdal, to almost the end of his life, hoped to revise his great work, to bring it up-to-date. It was not to be. The present *Dædalus* issue cannot claim to be the book he dreamed of. What, then, is its principal intent? To declare that no issue in the country is more vital than the relations of the races, which is more than just a study of whites and blacks. Ethnicity and "identity politics" have a quite new meaning in an America which introduced affirmative action originally to redress certain historical wrongs against African Americans, which has seen the concept expanded to include women, Hispanics, Native Americans, the disabled, and others. In today's

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world, while party political interests may make tax reduction, capital gains tax reform, federal budgetary control, prayer in the schools, and any number of other such issues paramount—and while any or all such issues may make a very great difference in who is nominated and who wins the presidential elections of 1996—they are all matters of small moment, not to be compared with those that relate to education, public safety, health, and well-being of the diverse populations that today constitute the American commonwealth.

These are the issues that ought to concern the nation—they are the ones that ought to be argued about. They all involve that rarely uttered word, race, memorialized in a heavy tome no longer in print in any edition, hardcover or paperback. Myrdal's great work—testimony to the extraordinary effects of the great Depression and World War II on a society, in his mind, desperately seeking to live up to its principles—calls out for major revision, to take account of all that has happened to the United States, fundamentally transformed by the Cold War, incapable of taking in or rejoicing in what has taken place in the world since 1989.

Recently, in Rome, *Dædalus* convened a conference that brought together men and women from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America to consider how the problems of race and ethnicity now play themselves out on the world stage. It is not insignificant that it should have been a Swedish institution, the Institute for Futures Studies, in collaboration with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, that recognized the need for summoning such a conference, and indeed provided the funds to make it possible. The impetus for the meeting was Myrdal's own classic work. In the letter of invitation that went out to men and women concerned with conditions in South Africa, India, and Japan, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, Russia, the Czech republic, and Ukraine, I wrote:

> Fifty years ago, Gunnar Myrdal wrote *An American Dilemma,* giving what may still be the most extensive study ever made of race relations in the United States. Today, one half-century later, the American dilemma has become the world's dilemma. This is not to suggest that the race question in the United States resembles that increasingly common in Europe, Africa, and Asia, but only that race, ethnicity, and national sentiment enjoy a salience today that they never previously commanded. Indeed, issues of homogeneity and heterogeneity

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are recognized to have quite new dimensions, and not only because of their religious and cultural dimensions in individual nation-states.

Our concern is with stereotypes and stigmas, but also with the larger issues that relate to prejudice and bias, that create such injustice and inequity in the contemporary world. Given the unprecedented events now occurring in Central and Eastern Europe—and not only in Russia—it is possible for some to portray the ethnic and nationalist upsurge as relating principally to the demise of all manner of controls exercised by authoritarian Communist leaders. The situation in the West, in Europe and the United States, belies such simple analysis. We need to explore the economic, social, and psychological conditions that perpetuate racial and ethnic division, that create such feelings of insecurity and rage. We need to analyze why the democratic instruments of contemporary politics are so incapable of dealing with the consequences of this yearning for identity, often a masked nostalgia for a very different world than that made up of individual homogeneous nation-states.

If, as is hoped, those who gathered in Rome, men and women of several generations coming from a wide range of academic and professional disciplines, are able in time to publish an issue on "The World's Dilemma: Race and Ethnicity," it will be one more way to commemorate Myrdal's historic text, a collaborative work in the best sense of the term, reflecting a time when men and women of different races could speak to each other candidly. Because that may be the lost art of our day, those who consult the present issue of *Dædalus* will see that no effort has been made to rein in any of the authors, to ask them to speak with a single voice. Those who read the individual essays attentively will recognize how much the authors differ among themselves, and not simply across a line marked by race.

This issue exists because two institutions of higher education, Morehouse College in Atlanta and Brown University in Providence, chose to support it. Morehouse, securing funds for a conference on "An American Dilemma Revisited: Race Relations in a Changing World," chose to share some of its very limited funds—nothing approaching what Carnegie provided Gunnar Myrdal and his colleagues before World War II—with the American Academy. We are grateful to Morehouse College, the Morehouse Research Institute, and its Director, Dr. Obie Clayton, Jr., for their invaluable help. All would wish me to recognize the financial aid they received from

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The Carnegie Corporation, The Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Russell Sage Foundation, The Foundation for Child Development, The Coca-Cola Company, and The AT&T Foundation. The issue could not have been completed without the assistance of Brown University, which has made so many different kinds of commitments to advance the interests of those who know that education is the country's principal problem, that it cannot be thought of except in a context that takes account of race, and how it plays in a world that is today very different from the one that Myrdal knew.

S.R.G.

ENDNOTES

[1]Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938–1987* (Chapel Hill, N.C. and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 10–35. Jackson writes: "During the first three decades of the century, American philanthropic foundations had come to play a significant role as planning agencies, undertaking studies of subjects that neither government nor corporations chose to support." Jackson's account of the circumstances that led to the Carnegie Corporation's decision, dealing with every aspect of the book's composition and reception, is very full. An equally excellent account is provided by David W. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations: The Use and Abuse of An American Dilemma, 1944–1969* (Baton Rouge, La. and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 1–27.

[2]Frederick P. Keppel, "Foreword," in Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), vi.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 100–108, 120–32. These pages tell a great deal about Myrdal's relations with his collaborators; they are equally revealing on the intellectual differences between those who assisted him.

[6]Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1993), 81–91. Urquhart's chapter on *An American Dilemma* carries the subtitle, "A Slave for the Swedish Simon Legree."

[7]Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 29–48. Southern's chapter, "The Ordeal of Collaboration, 1939–1943," is filled with interesting and important data; so, also, is the following chapter where he concerns himself with the effects of World War II and increasing militancy among blacks who recognized the contradictions between waging a war against fascism abroad and the tolera-

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tion of racism at home. Myrdal, Southern argues, was particularly sensitive to these issues; so, also, were many of his black colleagues.

[8]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* xlvii-liii. Myrdal's "Introduction," though awkwardly written in places, is a powerful statement of his major premises and conclusions.

[9]Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 187–88.

[10]Ibid., 241–71. See, also, Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 71–99. Each gives interestingly different accounts of the work's reception. My own differs somewhat from Jackson's. I do not, for example, accept that the book was essentially a "jeremiad," though it had much that might make it appear to be that.

[11]Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 202–203.

[12]Ibid., 203–204.

[13]Herbert Aptheker, *The Negro People in America: A Critique of Gunnar Myrdal's An American Dilemma* (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1977). The book was useful to many who have written on Myrdal, not least for Aptheker's penetrating and provocative comments on those who praised Myrdal's work, but also on those who found fault with it.

[14]Ibid., 7–16. The whole of Doxey Wilkerson's brief Introduction is worth reading if only because it so admirably expresses the rhetorical "excitements" of the Left immediately after the war.

[15]Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 261–64; Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 86, 120. Jackson's account of Young's role is significantly different from Southern's.

[16]Quoted in Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 104.

[17]Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 263.

[18]Ibid., 264. Young believed, in Jackson's words, that the "key questions for the postwar period were why prejudice and discriminatory behavior exist and what kinds of programs might be devised to reduce or eliminate such behavior. He doubted that the social scientists specializing in race relations, particularly the 'warhorses' who had been working in the field had anything new to say."

[19]A new generation of Roosevelt biographers, following in the tradition of Geoffrey Ward, who in his two magnificent volumes, *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882–1905* and *A First-Class Temperament: The Emergence of Franklin Roosevelt,* treated only the period before Roosevelt entered the White House, can be expected to probe much more deeply into Roosevelt's politics, much as British biographers and historians are doing with Winston Churchill. That "revisionism," which could easily degenerate into a kind of ideological warfare, given the contemporary political climate, cannot be hagiographic in the old tradition, but it must seek to establish the political context for what Roosevelt felt himself able to do. On Roosevelt's personal life, as distinct from his politics, Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 491–97, needs to be read. Her material on Roosevelt's illnesses adds significantly to our understanding of the last year of Roosevelt's life.

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[20]Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 113–25; also, more briefly, Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 273–79. These accounts need to be supplemented with David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 586–90.

[21]Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 276–77.

[22]Ibid., 278.

[23]Ibid., 296.

[24]Ibid., 297.

[25]Ibid.

[26]"The Negro American," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965) and "The Negro American—2," *Dædalus* 95 (1) (Winter 1966). The most complete analysis of the two *Dædalus* issues, as they appeared in Kenneth B. Clark and Talcott Parsons, eds., *The Negro American* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), is in Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 271–75. He also writes about the *Dædalus* issue, "Color and Race," published in 1967, and republished as a book by John Hope Franklin, ed., *Color and Race* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1969). See Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 276.

[27]Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life,* 440–45.

[28]Lyndon B. Johnson, "Foreword to the Issue," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 744.

[29]Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life,* 446–49.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Employment, Income, and the Ordeal of the Negro Family," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 760.

[32]St. Clair Drake, "The Social and Economic Status of the Negro in the United States," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 771–814; and James Tobin, "On Improving the Economic Status of the Negro," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 878–98.

[33]James Q. Wilson, "The Negro in Politics," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 961.

[34]Harold C. Fleming, "The Federal Executive and Civil Rights: 1961–1965," *Dædalus* 94 (4) (Fall 1965): 945.

[35]Oscar Handlin, "The Goals of Integration," *Dædalus* 95 (1) (Winter 1966): 284.

[36]Ralph Ellison, "Transcript of the American Academy Conference on the Negro American—May 14–15, 1965," *Dædalus* 95 (1) (Winter 1966): 436–37.

[37]As Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations,* 262, makes clear, "By 1965 most policy-oriented social scientists either pronounced Myrdal's ideas outdated or became somewhat indifferent to them. Far from indifferent, a great many black leaders and thinkers assigned Myrdal to the hottest part of Dante's inferno, usually with resounding invective. . . .After 1965 blacks increasingly appealed to white fears."

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Sissela Bok

Introduction

AN AMERICAN DILEMMA REVISITED was the title my father, Gunnar Myrdal, had given to his final, unfinished book. His aim was to reexamine all that had gone into writing *An American Dilemma*, to reevaluate its conclusions in the light of how race relations in America had evolved in the ensuing decades, and "to express my worried thoughts about the future development."[1]

But the task proved too great. In 1985, at the age of eighty-seven, increasingly immobile and blind, and unable to carry out or even oversee the research and the revisions that he knew were needed, he decided not to submit his manuscript for publication.[2] He wrote to André Schiffrin, his publisher, that, as an old author, he could not in good conscience sign off on a book once he knew that he could not go over the proofs.

My father used to say that some people were better than their books, whereas others were not as good as their books. As a child, I was perplexed by this distinction. How did he arrive at it? And what yardstick could he possibly be using? What kind of goodness, I later wondered, did he have in mind? But one thing seemed certain: his own preference. No matter what the personal sacrifice, he would rather leave behind him at least one great book than the memory of a life that, however worthy in other respects, had produced only mediocre writings.

This was the passionate scholarly commitment that he brought to the writing of *An American Dilemma*. Nothing less could do justice to the power and complexity of the problems he had been asked to tackle. He would sacrifice many pleasures, and much that most of

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us regard as indispensable to our lives and relationships, to have a chance to produce work that truly contributed to human knowledge and to the common good. When asked by my sister, Kaj Fölster, what had been the greatest moment of his life, my father answered that it had been when he finally stood at the Princeton train station, "with the manuscript for the *Dilemma* in my hands—ready! All that I had lived for."

In 1938, Dr. Frederick Keppel of the Carnegie Corporation asked my father to come to the United States to study "the American Negro Problem."[3] Keppel's courage, honesty, warm-heartedness, and imagination impressed my father deeply. Keppel insisted that my father begin his study by traveling through the South rather than settling down to do library research on race issues. My father soon recognized Keppel's wisdom in forcing him to confront the realities of discrimination right away: "I was shocked and scared to the bones by all the evils I saw, and by the serious political implications of the problem which I could not fail to appreciate from the beginning."[4]

It was clear from the outset that the problem my father had been asked to study, far from affecting blacks alone or simply dividing blacks and whites, was lodged in the hearts of all Americans: "It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the decisive struggle goes on. This is the central viewpoint of this treatise."[5]

This struggle generates the dilemma in the book's title. How can Americans square the nation's lofty ideals—the American Creed—with the base realities of racial discrimination? How can they claim to respect the dignity of all persons, equality, and the inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity, while countenancing pervasive violations of the dignity of blacks and of their rights to that freedom, that justice, and that fair opportunity?

> The Negro in America has not yet been given the elemental civil and political rights of formal democracy, including a fair opportunity to earn his living, upon which a general accord was already won when the American Creed was first taking form. And this anachronism constitutes the contemporary "problem" both to Negroes and to whites.[6]

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My father saw no reason why the contradiction between principles and practices could not be overcome.[7] The challenge for the nation lay in living up to its principles by altering its practices. Merely stating the dilemma, however, would do little to bring about such a change. Only by exposing the underlying conditions to full view and by exploring the details of possible remedies could the process of change be set in motion.

For this purpose, he assembled a remarkable team of social scientists to conduct meticulous research on all facets of the problem and to write preliminary drafts for a number of the chapters. Among these collaborators were Ralph Bunche, Franklin Frazier, Charles S. Johnson, Otto Klineberg, Arnold Rose, and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. In reminiscing about his collaboration with them, my father would often speak of the rare intellectual camaraderie that he experienced with these coworkers. To be sure, there were disagreements over what direction to take and what parts to include or leave out. He was never an easy person to work with, and some expressed resentment at his pressing them as hard as he did. But the magnitude of the challenge and the fact that so much of the writing had to be done in wartime could easily have derailed the project had he not been so determined to bring it to closure.

It is no wonder, given the priority my father always gave to authorship, that an important part of the dialogue I myself had with him concerned writing and scholarship. His insistence that human problems call for interdisciplinary study, combined with his rigorous and probing devotion to the crafts of research and writing, constitute part of what I see as his intellectual legacy. There is a moral side to that legacy as well: the concern to do justice to the complexity of problems such as those surrounding race and the duty to speak the truth as he saw it.

"At least I have never written anything I could be ashamed of," he would say, toward the end of his life, as he thought back over his work. Humble as this statement may sound, it is one that far from all scholars can honestly make. It, too, conveys the honor and personal responsibility that he associated with authorship.[8]

Such a view, however, implies no naive belief that any scholar could ever get at the full "truth" about any matter. Social scientists have to be as wary of all the influences that distort their own research as of the biases and rationalizations that they aim to

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expose among others. Throughout his life, my father pursued the inquiry into how valuations influence research and into possible means of minimizing, though never eliminating, resulting errors. As I look over my correspondence with him, I am struck by how often he brings up this issue, urging me to take it seriously in my own work. In a letter to me when I was beginning my doctoral studies in philosophy, he wrote:

> I am very excited that you are turning to the ethical problems in philosophy. Please read leisurely my *Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory* and my *Value in Social Theory*. Do not skip my "Postscript."...I am asking you this not in order to influence your development. You shall have your own life and not be under the pressure of my thoughts, but I do believe that it is civilized that you know something about how I have been living with this problem of the moral element in scholarly work since my youth. Remember what I point out in the P.S., that I do not feel I have solved the problem—only that I am nearer the truth than my contemporaries.[9]

It was that same "problem of the moral element in scholarly work" that he brought up in talking about the parts of *An American Dilemma* that he considered crucial to addressing *any* complex human problem. It will not do, he suggested, just to sit yourself down in front of whatever you see as the facts, to carry on with your research uncritically, and then to proceed to propose policies, solutions to the problems you address. And you will not have the energy and the courage to persevere without some framework of value premises such as the American Creed to buttress your conviction that change is possible and that your efforts can actually bear fruit. But that very framework is one you can never take for granted, never simply accept from your predecessors or your cultural tradition, and never leave unexplored, lest you risk damaging the integrity of your research.

I can hear him say the same to us now, as we reexamine the issues of race and community in the United States: some that remain dispiritingly similar to those he wrote about and others that are bewilderingly new. Without examining the value premises we bring to our research and policy proposals, we Americans shall be less able to explore these issues with the seriousness that they deserve, and therefore less able to do everything in our power to overcome

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the dilemma between the ideals of the American Creed and the realities of racial discrimination and all the evils it has brought in its wake.

There were three parts of *An American Dilemma*, my father would often say, that laid the foundations for that work as for *Asian Drama* and his later studies: the pitfalls and challenges that valuations and beliefs posed for social scientists studying issues as complex as those having to do with race in America; the interaction among the factors producing the complexity; and the sober Enlightenment ideals that he cherished to the end of his life in spite of much discouragement about the course of human affairs. Over the years, he would repeatedly suggest that I study these three parts:

> Read my first two Appendices about facts and valuations and beliefs! . . .*then* let's talk about valuation and bias and integrity in the social sciences.
>
> Read the third Appendix about the "principle of cumulation" and vicious circles, *then* let's talk about the ways in which discrimination, poverty, poor health care, unemployment, and other factors interact.
>
> Read the last paragraphs of the book and consider its last word, "Enlightenment," *then* let's talk about the possibility of bringing about genuine reforms.

Of the three parts, the one that he saw as most fundamental to all research was the first: the scrutiny, in the first two Appendices to *An American Dilemma,* of the pitfalls and challenges posed by valuations and beliefs.[10] He drew a distinction between beliefs—the ideas people have about reality—and valuations[11]—the ideas that people have of how reality ought to be:

> A person's beliefs, that is his knowledge, can be objectively judged to be true or false and more or less complete. His valuations—that a social situation or relation is, or was, "just," "right," "fair," "desirable," or the opposite, in some degree of intensity or other—cannot be judged by such objective standards as science provides. In their "*opinions*" people express both their beliefs and their valuations. Usually people don't distinguish what they think they know and what they like or dislike.[12]

Different valuations, moreover, are often in conflict, as in the views of many Americans regarding race. Efforts to deny such

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conflicts can result in distorted beliefs regarding reality and in the adherence to biases or hidden value premises. When it came to the race issue, my father found these distortions and biases as common among scholars and social theorists as among others, to the great detriment of rigorous social study. "Throughout the history of social studies," he would point out, "the hiding of valuations has served to conceal the inquirer's wish to avoid facing the real issues."[13] This inclination was part of human nature and not to be wondered at:

> When people try to deny, to the outside world and to themselves, that they live in moral compromise and that they ceaselessly and habitually violate their own ideals, they are customarily brought to falsify their perception of reality in order to conceal this from themselves and others. About this, I first became truly aware as a scholar through my work with *An American Dilemma.*[14]

The resulting difficulties for anyone attempting to do research or to make public policy are daunting. My father returned to these difficulties repeatedly in later writings.[15] The problem, he suggested, can never be fully eradicated. All we can do is strive to be as aware as possible of the inevitable limitations, subjectivities, and biases in how we perceive the outside world and our own feelings. Scholars, especially, owe it to themselves and to the public to be as open as possible about the valuations guiding their own research. To this end, he proposed that they should introduce "explicitly stated, specific, and sufficiently concretized value premises" from the outset of a study.[16]

In the case of his American study, my father found that the task was made easier by the fact that the American Creed, with its Enlightenment ideals, was already so clearly known and taught throughout American society. Later, he would conclude that this had been an unusual case, not repeated, for example, in working on his later book *Asian Drama,* where he found societal valuations to conflict in a much more confusing manner. But no matter what the difficulties, he continued to insist on two requirements without which social scientists could not legitimately study the biases of others: they must make every effort to probe their own unexamined stereotypes and other forms of what he called "opportunistic beliefs"—beliefs that allow them to hold conflicting valuations about,

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for instance, race and justice, without fully acknowledging the conflict; and they must account openly for the value premises on which they base their research and the steps of reasoning which they employ.

Striving to counter the force of all that goes into skewing perception and deliberation, my father aimed to address the role of values in complex human problems in as rigorously scientific a manner as possible. He hoped thereby to acknowledge the pervasive role of values in human affairs while at the same time stepping back to study them in as objective a manner as he could. To the extent that he succeeded, he would avoid the collapse into simplistic relativism and its by-products: irrationality, obscurantism, and, too often, the fatalism and intellectual defeatism of so many social scientists about the problems of race, in his day as in ours.[17] Instead, he meant to open his work to the same rigorous criticism to which he subjected that of others, and in this way to help advance the collective body of research and policy-making as far and as fast as possible.

The second part of his book to which my father frequently referred me was the third Appendix, entitled "A Methodological Note on the Principle of Cumulation."[18] This principle, often called that of the "vicious circle," ought, he suggests earlier in the book, to be developed into a main tool in studying social science. The more general term is preferable, a footnote points out, since the changes can work in a desirable direction as well as in an undesirable direction.[19] The principle of cumulation, which he characterizes as a main explanatory theme throughout the book, concerns equilibrium and change in the relationship between interdependent factors:

> White prejudice and discrimination keep the Negro low in standards of living, health, education, manners, and morals. This, in turn, gives support to white prejudice. White prejudice and Negro standards thus mutually "cause" each other. If things remain as they are and have been, this means that the two forces balance each other. Such a static "accommodation" is, however, entirely accidental. If either of the factors changes, this will cause a change in the other factor, too, and cause a process of interaction where the change in one will continually be supported by the reaction of the other factor. The whole system will be moving in the direction of the primary change, but much further. This is what we mean by cumulative causation.[20]

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My father had used theories of equilibrium and change in earlier writings in economics.[21] These theories, which have "given us, for the first time, something which approaches a real theory of economic dynamics," he now works out in a more general scheme for the study of social change. [22] In essence, when a number of different debilitating factors such as discrimination, poor housing, poor health care, and poor schooling affect one another, then an equilibrium of sorts can develop that either locks those most severely affected into their predicament or shifts into a downward spiral, a "vicious circle"; but when change for the better is brought to bear on any one of the factors, then the effects can be reversed, and a "virtuous circle" can affect the other factors as well.

Intuitively, this view of cumulative causation is powerful, not least as a counter to the counsels of despair that are understandable enough as reactions to prolonged and seemingly intractable social problems. When it comes to the problems of race in America or to other complex linkages of human problems, it is clear that there is not just one factor at play but many interlocking ones. And so long as it is possible to break in at any one point and begin to set in motion more generalized effects for the better throughout the system, there can be no room for defeatism.

Without such a possibility of shifting the equilibrium, and without the examples of so many persons willing to break into the cycles of despair and set in motion changes for the better, none of us might continue to work at social problems. Here again, my father saw a special role for social science in offering a systematic, rational approach to coordinate disparate efforts and to help mobilize large-scale social change. There could be little reason to attempt such change haphazardly. And those who held forth simple remedies for complex problems were not to be trusted. Interrelations are in reality much more complicated than in our abstract illustrations. And

> [i]t is likely that *a rational policy will never work by changing only one factor*, least of all if attempted suddenly and with great force. . . .This, and the impracticality of getting political support for a great and sudden change of just one factor—is the rational refutation of so-called panaceas.[23]

Panaceas and other one-factor solutions such as those stressing the economic factor as all-important cannot bring about the desired

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rational change for the better. "In an interdependent system of dynamic causation there is no 'primary cause' but everything is cause *to* everything else."[24]

In spite of this emphasis, it is often mistakenly thought that my father suggested that any one change could set in motion an entire "virtuous circle" and that there existed some simple, reified, interlocking system for reformers adept at social engineering to manipulate.[25] Clearly, the phrase "social engineering" that he used in earlier writings and in *An American Dilemma* does not help in this regard. But whereas today the phrase has connotations of misguided efforts at technocratic control, my father defined it more neutrally as "the type of practical research which involves rational planning."[26] In the years before coming to America to begin work on his book, my father had, with my mother Alva Myrdal, been instrumental, through such research and planning, in launching a broad set of reforms that came to be known as the Swedish welfare state.[27]

Even in my parents' early writings, the phrase never had the technocratic connotations that it has now assumed. By the time he came to write *An American Dilemma,* my father already had something much more fluid, much subtler in mind than anything resembling a rigid engineering model. He knew, moreover, that what he was learning challenged much of what he had taken for granted. In a letter to Gustav Cassel, his former professor and mentor, he wrote:

> I feel that I am making contact with certain fundamentals in the tragedy of humanity. I cannot yet say that I see clear lines before me. I still feel as if I am swimming in an ocean. . . .I have to dive more deeply than ever into a foreign culture. Even if it is tiring it makes us happy. After all, it is an extraordinary and rare expansion of the personality that we are living through.[28]

Try as I may, I cannot recall ever having heard either of my parents use the expression "social engineering" in conversation during the postwar decades. Yet it has proved irresistible as an epithet for conservative critics to attach to their world-view. Others, however, have chosen to bypass the phrase itself and to focus on the underlying theory concerning social change. They have found especially fruitful the view that one can postulate not only vicious but also virtuous circles, in which changes among different but

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interdependent forces affect one another respectively for the worse or for the better.

This perspective has mattered greatly to me in pursuing my own work, as has my father's critique, both of defeatist acceptance of the status quo with respect to complex human problems and of the faith in one-factor solutions. Rarely have I seen the need for an approach such as his, simultaneously constructive and wary of simplistic answers, as much as in analyzing the debate about the uniquely high levels of violence in America, compared to other industrialized nations. In this debate, scholars as well as policy advocates too often stress some one factor, such as firearm availability, poverty, family breakdown, drugs, or entertainment violence, as being the one and only factor requiring attention; or else they reject all efforts to bring about change with respect to any one of these factors and thus collapse into intellectual defeatism very like the pessimism decried by my father on the part of so many scholars with respect to the evils of segregation.

The third and final part of *An American Dilemma* that my father often stressed is that of its final paragraphs, and especially the last word of the last paragraph: "Enlightenment." The emphasis on the Enlightenment ideals that he espoused from his student days lends support and energy to the first two parts that I have discussed—so long as they are entertained together. The ideals were those of justice, liberty, rationality, the power of people to bring about change in their condition, and the consequent possibility of progress for individuals, groups, nations, and indeed all of humanity.

These ideals were, in one sense, what made it so important for him to tackle the problems having to do with race in America, and later those of European cooperation after World War II, world poverty and exploitation, and the resistance to wars such as those in Vietnam and Afghanistan. His awareness grew of how societies as well as individuals can regress as well as progress—sometimes regress to such bestiality that the very epithet is a slur on the animal kingdom. This is one reason why he agreed so strongly with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that political advocacy and movements for social change must be nonviolent at all times; and why he thought King's stand against the war in Vietnam was fully consonant with his rejection of violence by all sides in the Civil Rights struggle.[29]

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Lars Ingelstam, a younger Swedish colleague and friend of my father's, said of him after his death in 1987:

> Gunnar Myrdal wanted to see himself as an analytical intellectual, but there was in him an unbending desire to bring about change, an insistence that the world could be arranged in a more rational manner.[30]

It has become fashionable to decry the Enlightenment values that inspired such engagement on the part of intellectuals. Many speak of the naïveté, if not downright dangerousness, of Enlightenment thinkers who spoke of preferring rational approaches to problems, of the possibility of progress, and of the perfectibility of human beings and societies. But my father's devotion to Enlightenment values was always tempered by the first two factors mentioned earlier—his searching awareness of human limitations and of all the obstacles to rationality and objectivity, along with his understanding of the complexity of interacting forces.

He regarded sheer uncritical faith in rationality and progress and human perfectibility as indeed naive. And he stressed that few of the greatest Enlightenment thinkers cherished any such confidence, untempered by all that can skew rationality and derail progress. To be sure, they saw progress as possible; but few thought it would come about soon, much less automatically. To be sure, they also wrote of the improvability (the word "perfectibility" that is carelessly attributed to them as a group was much less common, except among French thinkers) of human beings and society; but, again, few thought that such changes could come about save through immense efforts.

My father never saw a reason to change the last word in *An American Dilemma*. He stood to the end by the convictions expressed in the last three paragraphs of that book:

> Social study is concerned with explaining why all these potentially and intentionally good people so often make life a hell for themselves and each other when they live together, whether in a family, a community, a nation, or a world. The fault is certainly not with becoming organized *per se*. In their formal organizations, as we have seen, people invest their highest ideals. These institutions regularly direct the individual toward more cooperation and justice than he would be inclined to observe as an isolated private person. The fault is, rather, that our structures of organizations are too imperfect, each by itself, and badly integrated into a social whole.

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The rationalism and moralism which is the driving force behind social study, whether we admit it or not, is the faith that institutions can be improved and strengthened and that people are good enough to live a happier life. With all we know today, there should be the possibility to build a nation and a world where people's great propensities for sympathy and cooperation would not be so thwarted.

To find the practical formulas for this never-ending reconstruction of society is the supreme task of social science. The world catastrophe places tremendous difficulties in our way and may shake our confidence to the depths. Yet we have in social science a greater trust in the improvability of man and society than we have had since the Enlightenment.[31]

ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma Revisited,* unpublished draft, 2.

[2]Instead, he asked that the manuscript be available at the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv in Stockholm, Sweden where the rest of his papers are kept.

[3]For accounts and analyses of this undertaking, see Walter Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Ellen Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989); and David W. Southern, *Gunnar Myrdal and Black-White Relations: The Use and Abuse of "An American Dilemma," 1944–1969* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

[4]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* twentieth anniversary ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), xxv.

[5]Ibid., lxxi.

[6]Ibid., 24.

[7]I draw, in this paragraph and the following one, from chaps. 8 and 9 of Sissela Bok, *Alva Myrdal: A Daughter's Memoir* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1991).

[8]For a bibliography of Gunnar Myrdal's works through 1981, see Kerstin Assarsson-Rizzi and Harald Bohrn, eds., *Gunnar Myrdal: A Bibliography, 1919–1981,* 2d ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1984). See also Gilles Dostaler, Diane Ethier, and Laurent Lepage, eds., *Gunnar Myrdal and His Works* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1992).

[9]Letter from Gunnar Myrdal to Sissela Bok, 23 July 1962, referring to Gunnar Myrdal, *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930); and Gunnar Myrdal, *Value in Social Theory: A Selection of Essays on Methodology,* ed. Paul Streeten (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958).

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[10]Myrdal, "Appendix 1. Note on Valuations and Beliefs," *An American Dilemma,* 1027–1034; reprinted in Myrdal, *Value in Social Theory,* 71–86; Myrdal, "Appendix 2. A Methodological Note on Facts and Valuations in Social Science," *An American Dilemma,* 1035–1064; reprinted in Myrdal, *Value in Social Theory,* 118–53.

[11]He preferred the term "valuation" thus specified, to "value," which he found looser and more confusing.

[12]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1027.

[13]Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama: An Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 32.

[14]Gunnar Myrdal, *Hur styrs landet? (How is the Land Governed?)* (Stockholm: Rabén och Sjögren, 1982), 263. My translation.

[15]See, especially, Gunnar Myrdal, *Objectivity in Social Research* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

[16]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1043.

[17]For a discussion of Myrdal's views on this subject, see Michel Rosier, "On the Hypothetical Character of 'Moral Premises'," in Dostaler, Ethier, and Lepage, eds., *Gunnar Myrdal and His Works,* 174–88; and Jacques Peltier, "Myrdal and Value-Loaded Concepts," in Ibid., 188 –205.

[18]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1065–1072; reprinted in Myrdal, *Value in Social Theory,* 198 –205.

[19]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 75.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Writings for which he was awarded the 1974 Nobel Prize in economics.

[22]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1065.

[23]Ibid., 77.

[24]Ibid., 78.

[25]See, for example, Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience,* 197.

[26]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1044.

[27]The book by Alva Myrdal and Gunnar Myrdal in which they proposed these reforms is *Kris i Befolkningsfrågan (Crisis in the Population Question)* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934).

[28]Gunnar Myrdal, letter to Gustav Cassel, January 1939. My translation.

[29]The two met only once, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mrs. Coretta King came to my parent's Stockholm apartment for dinner in December 1964, the day after King received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

[30]Lars Ingelstam, "Kampen mot cynismen: minnesord om Gunnar Myrdal," unpublished comments made 2 June 1987; quoted in Sissela Bok, "Introduction," in Dostaler, Ethier, and Lepage, eds., *Gunnar Myrdal and His Works,* 3.

[31]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1024.

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The importance of the inculcation of the general principles of democracy in the American people which has been going on for so many generations, should not be under-rated. It is true that practical and specific issues are often avoided in a rather opportunistic way, so as not to disturb the conscience of the white people. The fact that ignorance and unconcernedness are so opportune means, of course, that additional popular education along more concrete lines will meet tremendous emotional resistance. But this resistance is not insurmountable. People are also bent upon rationality. Their allegiance to the ideals of the American Creed is strong and is held consciously. The ideals of Christianity also command their allegiance. One implication of their belief in the principles of democracy and Christianity is that they are susceptible to the more specific and practical consequences of these principles. There are, as we shall find, other important trends that will make ignorance and unconcernedness more difficult to uphold, and that will press for public education in this field. Through unionization and social legislation the labor market is increasingly coming under the control of a formal regulation that will demand equality of opportunity.

Gunnar Myrdal

From *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*

Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944

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Robert A. Dentler

The Political Sociology of the African American Situation: Gunnar Myrdal's Era and Today

INTRODUCTION

GUNNAR MYRDAL'S *AN AMERICAN DILEMMA* is a monumental achievement in social scientific reporting on race relations. It has outlasted severe criticisms which charged that it embodied a white liberal ideology and denigrated African Americans by portraying them as mere reactors to institutional white racism rather than as creators and carriers of a great subcultural tradition. It continues to be read, studied, and used in policy interpretations to this day. It also provides a good baseline from which to examine the change, or the absence of change, in race relations over the past fifty years. In this essay, *An American Dilemma* shall be used, with certain caveats and revisionist considerations, to assess the contemporary political sociology of the African American situation, but also to reflect on a number of possible futures.

Gerald David Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr. considered these questions in a report commissioned by the National Research Council, entitled *A Common Destiny*[1]; their findings on the political status and participation of African Americans, invaluable in any number of respects, were criticized by Aldon Morris in a review that merits attention:

> The lack of theoretical explanations of racial inequality and race relations, even at the middle range, constitutes its greatest weakness. We should learn once again that a theoretical framework is crucial in the study of complex social phenomena because, to a large degree, it

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determines what kinds of questions we ask and helps differentiate the trivial from the profound. *A Common Destiny* does not grapple with the hard questions concerning black-white relations.[2]

This essay differs in three important respects from *A Common Destiny*. First, it focuses as narrowly as possible on the political situation of African Americans fifty years after *An American Dilemma,* introducing points about social structure and the economics of power only as they pertain to this purpose. Second, key issues for Myrdal—strategies of political organization; prospects for extensive electoral participation; and ways to gain shares in the national power structure—are regarded as the key issues today. Third, the arguments made in this essay do not stray far from the main propositions advanced by Myrdal in chapter 23 of *An American Dilemma* on "Trends and Possibilities," borrowing concepts from a middle range sociological theory to allow for an interpretation of the contemporary situation, a projection from current trends.[3]

MYRDAL ON UNIFIED BLOC VOTING

Myrdal believed that in order for Negroes to achieve significant political power they would have to vote as a unified bloc. The conditions that obtained in 1944—the virtual disenfranchisement of Negroes in the Deep South, the large number of states with virtually no Negro residents, and the fluidity of Negro relations with the Republican and Democratic parties—formed the foundation of this belief. Furthermore, Myrdal believed that comparable conditions would prevail in the future. Myrdal thought that the Negroes' common caste condition would lead the more economically-advantaged to recognize their shared interests with those of their race who earned less.

Myrdal saw that Negroes exerted little or no influence on national power relations, that they were manipulated by white leaders within the major parties. On the local level, they were manipulated by Negro politicians who were, in effect, ward managers who delivered votes for personal gain, securing in addition certain small concessions in the services promised their ghetto communities. Myrdal, in chapter 23, was not predicting a trend toward increased Negro power; rather, he was grasping at straws in a palpably desperate

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hope that Negroes might discover some way to unify their political community and escape being manipulated. Towards that end, Myrdal developed an elaborate and novel strategy, which in the end he knew to be unworkable. It would have required one group of Negro leaders to identify with one of the major parties, while the other remained independent, negotiating important national policy issues.

NO THIRD PARTY FORMATION

In chapter 22, Myrdal explored and then dismissed the possibility that Negroes would ever embrace fascism or other totalitarian parties of the Right. He was less certain about any future propensity toward left-wing radicalism, however. He noted that the propaganda and recruitment efforts of the American Communist Party during the Great Depression and the pro-Soviet friendship drives from 1939 to 1944 made a little headway but never, in Myrdal's words, "succeeded in getting any appreciable following among Negroes in America."[4]

As a European social scientist, Myrdal was keenly mindful of how the American polity was organized almost exclusively, so far as the exercise of power relations and the accumulation of influence were concerned, around a two party system. Consistent with his theory of post-slavery Negro history, Myrdal argued that Negroes would continue indefinitely to seek to bid for influence from within that system and not by creating alternatives.

Myrdal understood the hold Republican party leaders had on Negroes from the Civil War until the advent of the Great Depression. He also foresaw the conditions under which African American participation in the New Deal Democratic party as the party of liberal reform would continue to evolve after World War II. He hoped that this would permit many "Negro politicians [to] be released from the dilemma of double loyalty to the party and to the Negro group. This would remove to a certain extent one of the fundamental causes of political cynicism and corruption among Negro politicians."[5]

Precepts about political organization for Negroes in the 1940s have little relevance to the situation in the 1990s, however. For example, in Myrdal's time there were few independent voters, where

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today that group comprises a large portion of each state's electorate. National power relations were grounded in *state* parties. And the exercise of party will over the actions of individual officials was more influential and disciplined than it is today.

THE CENTRALITY OF SUFFRAGE

The denial of the right to vote was, as Myrdal argued in several chapters of his book, the primary source of the Negro's low social status. Myrdal noted that the broad range of Negro leaders and intellectuals, from the most cautious and conservative to the most daring and liberal, had long maintained that suffrage was the essential key to future racial progress.

Myrdal saw that the forces working to secure full voting rights for Negroes were too vast to be denied fulfillment in the postwar years. He forecast that the conservative strategy in the South of emphasizing state's rights would be defeated. He did not go so far as to consider the likely consequences of the attainment of full suffrage; indeed, he recognized that "Most Southern Negroes seem to keep their minds turned away from the whole matter. As we have shown, they have, indeed, good reasons for lack of political interest."[6] But Myrdal did foresee that an acceleration in political participation would follow enfranchisement. He accurately predicted federal intervention in issues of voting rights and the eventual collapse of the South's "states' rights" line of defense. Indeed, he slyly, if timidly, suggested that white politicians in the South could avoid humiliation by initiating reforms *before* they were introduced by the federal establishment. Myrdal wrote that Southern white conservatives would continue to oppose full suffrage until their illusions were shattered by legal action and political competition.

TRANSITION TOWARD SUFFRAGE

Gunnar Myrdal and his associates did their research at a time which, we now realize, was a turning point in the political history of African Americans. Literacy tests and poll taxes as well as retaliation against those who tried to register were still widely practiced in 1942–1943, but one by one the barriers to suffrage were being felled by the Supreme Court. The grandfather clause,

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one of the bulwarks of black disenfranchisement, was struck down in *Lane* v. *Wilson* in 1939. In 1941 the Supreme Court in *U.S.* v. *Classic* decided that primary elections were subject to federal control, setting the stage for the *Smith* v. *Allwright* decision: "Under our Constitution the great privilege of the ballot may not be denied any man by the State because of his color."[7] In 1953, just a decade after Myrdal made his prediction, the Supreme Court ruled in *Terry* v. *Adams* that racial exclusion from the so-called pre-primary as well as from primary elections was unconstitutional. With *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, many related legal barriers were destroyed. The force of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments was revived as surely as it had been put to sleep sixty years earlier.

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Important Civil Rights gains were achieved in the immediate aftermath of World War II: the beginnings of judicial action against the disenfranchisement of African Americans; the striking down of racial covenants in residential housing policies; and the integration of the armed forces. Further progress was slowed by the advent of the Cold War. Neither the Truman nor the Eisenhower administrations did much more than previous administrations to improve racial justice or to meet African American needs.[8]

Congress passed a Civil Rights Act in 1957 and strengthened it a bit in 1960. Thurgood Marshall commented that these statutes were not worth the paper they were printed on, but in hindsight they were symbolic forerunners of the great Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The 1954 *Brown* decision triggered substantial early changes in political participation among Negroes in one important respect: It spurred an otherwise gradualistic process of change. As Citizens Councils formed to resist the implementation of the *Brown* decision and as the Ku Klux Klan began to ride again, blacks responded with collective action, breaking from the stereotype in which they had been cast since 1867 as a compliant, self-segregated, and manipulable subpopulation. Thus, white reactions to the *Brown* decision helped to ignite the black revolution in the South and the rise of the Civil Rights movement.

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The first nationally broadcast occasion of the movement's rise was the Montgomery bus boycott; the second was the series of marches and protests employed by Martin Luther King, Jr. and other black leaders to draw whites into the movement nationwide. This mobilization succeeded in marshaling a coalition of biracial groups, including some white elites, in the labor, church, and academic establishments of the day.

Myrdal appraised accurately the headway that was being made from 1937–1943 by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund (NAACP-LDF) in the federal courts. He traced out the ways in which World War II would change America's political economy in a direction beneficial for Negroes. However, he did not predict, nor did other social scientists of his time, the advent of a powerful, vast, and transformative social movement of African Americans.

The *Brown* decision, the Civil Rights movement, and the 1963 March on Washington, combined with the accession of Lyndon Johnson to the presidency, created conditions for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Titles I and VIII built on the progress that had been made earlier in enhancing the political rights of minorities: Title I was aimed at undermining the use of literacy tests in granting voting rights and tried to provide universal standards for qualifications for voting nationwide. Title VIII created federal monitoring mechanisms for keeping track of voter registration and voting statistics in every state. But in all of its other particulars the Act focused on essentially nonpolitical rights. It did not attack the still formidable barriers to full suffrage. Albert Blaustein and Robert Zangrando reported that the number of Negroes registered to vote in Alabama rose by only a few percentage points (from 14.1 percent to 19.4 percent) between 1958 and 1964; in Mississippi, historically the most closed state, Negro voter registration increased only two percentage points (from 4.4 percent to 6.4 percent).[9] The NAACP-LDF, the American Civil Liberties Union, and groups of attorneys in Mississippi and Alabama, meanwhile, continued to press for the elimination of the suffrage barriers.

These efforts, the Civil Rights movement, and the intensifying impact of the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act culminated in the single most decisive legislative action for African American political rights since Reconstruction: the Voting Rights Act of

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1965. The Act made illegal all tests or other devices used to qualify a person as a voter, including literacy. Voter registration and fair polling procedures were monitored in seven "covered states" in the South by examiners employed by the US Civil Rights Commission.

Between 1965 and 1975 white Southern political leaders attempted to reintroduce in state and local legislation virtually every device that had been used after the second Reconstruction to evade and delay the impact of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.[10] Each strategy had to be countervailed in the courts. Appellate courts and the US Supreme Court protected the meaning and implementation of the Act until 1980, when a sharply divided Supreme Court decided in *City of Mobile* v. *Bolden* to narrow the scope of the Act and to impose a trial standard of intent to discriminate. Congress revised and amended the Act in 1982, after enormous political force had been mobilized by Civil Rights groups.

In spite of year by year attacks on the Civil Rights Act, it continued to enlarge and enhance African American electoral rights very profoundly. The US Civil Rights Commission reported in 1975, a decade after the Act's passage, that the percentage of eligible blacks registered to vote in the covered states increased from 29 percent in 1964 to over 56 percent in 1972. A later study revealed that the proportion of all elected officeholders in the covered states increased from less than 0.5 percent in 1968 to 5.6 percent in 1980.

Further evidence of this progress is even more impressive:

> Between 1964 and 1988 the percentage of voting-age blacks registered in the eleven southern states increased from 43.3 percent to approximately 63.7 percent. Black registrants in the five Deep South states increased in the same period from 22.5 to about 65.2 percent. The gap in black-white registration narrowed dramatically by one reckoning. . .from 47.1 to -4.4 points (indicating a black rate higher than the white one). . . .The number of black elected officials increased from fewer than 100 in 1965 in the seven originally targeted states to 3,265 in 1989. In 1989 blacks in these states comprised 9.8 percent of all elected officials as compared with about 23 percent of the voting-age population.[11]

Jaynes and Williams report that black voter participation has increased across all social strata:

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> Since 1978 there has been a significant reduction in the impact of socioeconomic status as a determinant of black turnout. . . .In 1984, blacks at the lowest levels of education and income outvoted similar whites by 9 to 12 percentage points; at the upper end of the status scale, black and white turnout was about equal. Blacks aged 35 or younger were 7 to 9 percentage points more likely to vote than whites of the same age.
>
> Overall, the 1980s have seen a dramatic mobilization of lower status blacks with a previously marginal attachment to electoral politics. For example, first-time black registrants between 1982 and 1984 were disproportionately composed of young people with high levels of racial consciousness. . . .The trend toward mobilization of lower status blacks is not mirrored in the white population: between 1978 and 1984, the determinants of white turnout remained fairly constant.[12]

OTHER ASPECTS OF VOTER PARTICIPATION

Myrdal's vision of full suffrage was realized within the first decade following the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As Myrdal predicted, African Americans have, quite consistently and overwhelmingly, stayed within the two party system; they have not, to any noteworthy extent, moved toward movements or parties of the radical Left or Right. The question of whether African Americans have come to vote in a unified bloc, as Myrdal recommended, is much more complicated. Attorneys and political scientists alike refer to the contemporary features of bloc voting in three overlapping concepts: vote dilution, racially polarized voting, and bloc voting by race. Each should be distinguished from disenfranchisement, although statistically there is little difference.

The Voting Rights Act, especially as amended in 1982, proscribes actions which have the effect of diluting the outcomes of minority voting in most elections. Indeed, gerrymandering of districts, malapportionment, and various types of at-large elections were among the devices that, even before passage of the Civil Rights Act, were struck down by the federal courts because they violated the Constitution. Court cases contesting new and ingenious schemes to achieve dilution have continued to this day.[13] Sheila Ards and Marjorie Lewis categorize the most common racial dilution tactics as: *cracking* (dispersing large concentrations of minorities among

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several districts), *stacking* (combining several concentrations of minority population along with a greater white population to assure a white majority), and *packing* (combining minority voters into one or more districts to minimize the number of districts controlled in elections for state and local offices).[14]

Myrdal thought of unified bloc voting as a tactic for Negroes to achieve electoral leverage. Those who advocated and helped achieve the Voting Rights Act of 1965 believed the Act would diminish the significance of race in politics. The two ideas, though closely interrelated, are not the same.

Racially polarized voting provides an indicator of the extent to which the race of the voter, not necessarily of the candidate, determines the outcome of an election. Polarized voting is, according to Laughlin McDonald, "omnipresent" throughout the country.[15] It results when voters cast their votes as a function of their race. Thus, polarization results from bloc voting, but not in the sense Myrdal meant.

In an essay on voting equity, Lani Guinier wrote:

> To overcome white bloc voting that consistently defeats the choices of black voters, voting rights activists have endorsed as a remedial strategy the creation within the larger electorate of some majority-black election districts. The exclusive remedial focus, however, ignores the broad-based participatory and transformative politics implicit in the original vision of the civil rights movement that led to passage of the Voting Rights Act in the first place. Even at its most impressive, the remedial focus has failed to produce real transfers of power.[16]

However, as their voting mass has grown, African Americans have performed as a bloc in the way Myrdal prescribed by becoming the *swing* vote in countless local, state, and federal elections:

> Of the three elections won by the Democratic party since 1960—John Kennedy, 1960; Lyndon Johnson, 1964; and Jimmy Carter, 1976—the black vote has been pivotal in two, in 1960 and 1976. In 1960, the black vote was critical in fifteen states that totaled 209 electoral votes for Kennedy, more than two-thirds of the total he needed to win. Nationwide, Kennedy won 70 percent of the black vote. In 1976, southerner Carter won only 45 percent of the white vote in the South, but won more than 90 percent of the black vote.[17]

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Bill Clinton, moreover, was elected with less than 45 percent of the popular vote nationally but with more than 90 percent of the African American vote. And the political logic of full suffrage, stimulated by Jesse Jackson's registration drives, the modest successes of his Rainbow Coalition, and his extraordinary performance as a vote-getting presidential candidate in 1980 and 1984, culminated in 1992 in the election of forty African Americans to the US Congress.[18]

AFRICAN AMERICAN POWER

Chicago's long-term Congressman William Dawson used to declare that "a voteless people is a hopeless people."[19] This adage was countered by the equally true observation, expressed in his long career as a loyal member of the Cook County Democratic Party machine, that people can win the vote in a democracy and still be rendered relatively powerless politically. To what extent, therefore, has the power potential of African Americans changed in the fifty years after Myrdal?

Gunnar Myrdal, like most scholars on race relations and ethnicity in America, assumed that the racial hierarchy in America was best explained as the psychological vestiges of the institution of slavery and the corresponding social and ecological history of white domination and exploitation. Although the color line has been breached in elections in recent years, it is also true that political trends during the 1980s forced a reconsideration of Myrdal's point of view.[20] As Anthony J. Lemelle points out in his review of a book by Ralph C. Gomes and Linda Faye Williams[21]:

> The title of the work [*From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African-American Political Power*] is a misnomer in two senses: the African-American political experience, according to the authors' analyses, is more accurately described as from exclusion to illusion, and it is never demonstrated that the masses of black Americans wished for inclusion in U.S. political institutions, though some did. . . .The logical support for the bias of inclusion is that more inclusion is synonymous with more progress. . . .In the end, there is only an apology for the fact that the election of more blacks has been accompanied by deterioration in the quality of African-American life.[22]

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Benjamin B. Ringer and Elinor R. Lawless challenge the popular notion that there is a universalistic, inclusive, and meritocratic American Creed and that modernization gradually widens fulfillment of the Creed in real social life, leaving racial inequality as a marginal product of aberrant behavior and the vestigial ravages from the past.[23] The point of view they dispute is the core source of policy hope in *An American Dilemma,* as it has been the guiding source of the integrationist, nonnationalistic corpus of civil rightists since the Civil War. This vision tends to minimize the mechanisms of sociocultural hegemony in which every facet of American society, however vast and vital or tiny and trivial, is structured—that is, predesigned—to perpetually reproduce racial hierarchy and racial/ethnic structural dominance by whites. If Gomes, Williams, Ringer, and Lawless are correct, the thesis of hegemony is that there is no way for the African American subpopulation to "catch up" in terms of power shares. There is a grain of truth in this thesis, but it is countervailed by the dynamism and relative openness of a multiethnic, postindustrial society like America.

Robert Dahl demonstrated long ago that the power of individuals or groups involves much more than membership in a ruling elite.[24] There are not only differences in the basis or source of power and in the means used to employ power, but in the scope of power. Contrasting political power relations in Myrdal's era with those of today, Dahl concludes that those relations are now extremely fragmented, systemically unintegrated, incomprehensible, and volatile.[25] He finds that power once concentrated in the White House and the Congress, as well as in a network of establishments such as the Church, Chambers of Commerce, and Civil Rights organizations, has been transferred at many points to the political action committees and to the interest groups that control them. Dahl also notes a great intensification in the scope and importance of direct communications between leaders and the public, particularly through television and radio, while the representational and deliberative processes common to public policy-making have become diffuse, spread out, and very hard to trace or interpret. Elected leaders and the party organizations that elect them are less influential and more subject every year to single-issue lobbies, he argues.

The effect of these changes on power, then, is akin to changes in economic and community structures since 1965. For example, Af-

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rican American leaders became mayors of cities just as cities were plummeting into economic and social disorganization. Other African American leaders have entered the Congress, the Cabinet, and the advisory groups closest to the President at a time when the federal political system, as Dahl puts it, "seems to lack any well defined systemic properties." As African Americans have come to participate more and more extensively and strategically in electoral politics, the power structure, and relations between its units, has become opaque as well as disjointed. Primed to exert power and to obtain an equitable share of influence over policy, African American leaders today are still not based in any numbers in the groups where policy influence is most often exerted.

The Civil Rights movement, which began to swell in Montgomery in 1955, reached the peak of its impact on racial politics and national policy just a decade later. A year before his death, Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote:

> The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap. The limited reforms have been obtained at bargain rates. There are no expenses, and no taxes are required, for Negroes to share lunch counters, libraries, parks, hotels, and other facilities with whites. Even the psychological adjustment is far from formidable. . . .Even the more significant changes involved in voter registration require neither large monetary nor psychological sacrifice. . . .
>
> The real cost lies ahead. The discount education given Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if quality education is to be realized. Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voting rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters.[26]

In the aftermath of the burning of Watts in 1965, when political as well as physical renewal was so slow as to have been barely begun by the time of the riot in South Central Los Angeles twenty-seven years later,[27] social scientists came to recognize that such changes in racial power relations as enfranchisement or the integrating of lunch counters took place because they did not cost a great deal in money or in the preservation of white dominance. Reconstructing Watts in 1965 would have cost at least a billion dollars, and reconstructing Los Angeles after the 1992 riots would

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have cost at least five billion dollars. Nothing approaching these sums has been invested.

It is in this sense that, as Lerone Bennett, Jr. put it in 1982, in the case of African Americans "everything has changed but nothing has changed." Terribly significant yet low-budget policy changes have brought dignity, self-respect, and symbolic equality, but they have not impacted substantially on the solution of extreme deprivation in jobs, housing, and education. Voting rights, increasing participation in the electoral process, and the election of many African American leaders to political office has thus not transformed the power status of Black Americans in general.

SEARCHING FOR EXPLANATIONS

John Rex and David Mason edited a useful collection of the currently prevailing theories of race relations in England and North America.[28] Rational choice theory is highly favored among political scientists,[29] although most sociologists tend to prefer a different approach.

Key components of sociological theory are expressed in the concept of internal colonialism[30] which combines the ideas of involuntary entry into a society; transformation of the original culture into a version of the dominant culture; political and economic domination by other groups; and victimization through prejudice and discrimination.

Theorists of internal colonialism espouse the notion that the political formula governing power relations in a nation-state changes in concert with changes in the social structure. Thus, as the structural mobility of African Americans has accelerated since 1960, the political strategies of the white-dominated major parties have changed. The Republican party in the South cultivated white movement out of the Democratic party by careful manipulation of racial polarization. This strategy was pivotal in the election campaigns of Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and Bush, as well as many members of Congress.

The polarization exploited by the Republicans was made possible by the African American migration from the South. The Democrats inherited African American support somewhat by default. No other population subgroup in the nation has unified so solidly around

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Democratic candidates and platforms: Jimmy Carter lost the white majorities in border and Southern states in his 1976 bid for election but more than offset this loss with black votes. Jesse Jackson demonstrated in 1980 and again in 1984 how far minority bloc unity could impel a candidate, but he also further polarized party politics at the state as well as the federal level.

The other aspect of this process which is consistent with the theory of internal colonialism is that Republicans, with occasional exceptions of course, have treated the African American bloc as a kind of colonial set of political outcasts to be avoided in the search for increased advantage among whites, while Democrats have both counted on the bloc and taken it for granted, making very minimal concessions in promises or exchanges.

Bill Clinton counted on overwhelming black voter support in his 1992 campaign, but his prospects for victory were so fragile that he spent most of his campaign energies courting white suburbanites. He has yet to recognize his political indebtedness to racial/ethnic minority voters. Indeed, his swift repudiation of the nomination of Lani Guinier, an advocate of sophisticated proportionalism in voting, symbolizes his tactics in handling racial power relations.

President Clinton's record is more mixed than this suggests, however. His cabinet included two African American secretaries, Ron Brown and Mike Estep, who resigned in October 1994. Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros is implementing strategies to make urban housing projects more secure and to disperse poor minority families from such projects into better housing in the suburbs. Clinton also responded favorably to intense pressure from African American leaders to strengthen his initiatives toward resolving the Haitian crisis.

Most of the power struggles the Clinton administration has faced which involve domestic policies, however, have turned on questions of how to avoid being outflanked by right-wing groups. Nevertheless, the Clinton years signify the beginning of a nationwide swing away from the Right and toward the center. This swing could, theoretically at least, be targeted to benefit African Americans.

Alex Willingham shows how voting policy has come to affect major party strategies between 1965 and 1992 and summarizes how the Reagan and Bush administrations succeeded in politicizing voting access.[31] He also illuminates the ways in which both parties

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now focus on competing for support in the arena in which votes can be won by policy appeals. That arena excludes the so-called urban underclass, referred to most recently by President Clinton as the "outerclass."

Enfranchisement has arrived; elected officials who are African American will soon approximate the share of the group in the adult population nationwide; and political involvement of wealthier and professional class African Americans has accelerated tremendously during the last quarter of this century. However, political equality continues to elude the vast majority of African Americans.

Why has the political power share of African Americans grown so little while electoral participation and impact have grown so much? As African Americans have relocated to the north and west, and as middle and upper income households have left the cities for the suburbs, the demographic concentration that made the Black churches and the black household major forces in the Civil Rights movement has ended. In a multiethnic society and in a polity of greatly modified power concentrations across parties and interest groups, there is no longer a distinctive or singular black establishment. At the same time, the Black churches have lost much of their hold on younger urban households and are in the same long-term period of membership decline that characterizes established white denominations.

The Republican manipulation of racial polarization in the South redesigned regional and national power structures between 1970 and 1990. White liberal and white labor alliances with African American causes were badly fractured by this redesign. There was, by 1980, little mileage left in the coalition politics of urban Democrats, Big Labor, and the other groups unified by President Roosevelt during the Great Depression. As African Americans in the cities lost the economic gains they had made in earlier decades, the new chaos of gang formation, drug trafficking, armed violence, and hopelessness began to set in. New and revived exhibitions of white racial hatred sprang up around these trends, and, as in Myrdal's day, the hatred was grounded in renewed social distance between the races as well as intensified fear of criminal violence. As criminologists Albert Cardarelli and Jack McDevitt commented recently, "Boston currently is a City where citizen perceptions do not meet reality. Fear is increasing while crime is decreasing."[32]

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An improvement in the share of power exercised by African Americans is unlikely to occur under these conditions. More than a decade of intensifying mistrust, increases in the gap between the white rich and the black poor, and profound changes in patterns of housing and economic location have made dialogue even more difficult than in 1965.

SIFTING THROUGH ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

Prospects for a national improvement in the power shares of African Americans grew dim during the Reagan years, and were dimmed further by the economic depression of 1989–1993. While the number of African Americans in the federal cabinet and in corporate boardrooms has grown substantially, and while the Black Congressional Caucus has grown in its own power purview and in the number of committee chairs its senior members occupy, the wall surrounding the white preserve of power has grown thicker, not thinner, since 1980. Against this backdrop, advocates for a more equitable distribution of power have come to look beyond the power of the vote.

One much discussed and currently implemented strategy is that of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) in the late 1980s. It involves co-opting the policy and ideology of the center of the electoral spectrum and countervailing the costs of party identification with the policies of the Great Society and with racial/ethnic minority interests. Thus, Clinton administration proposals have tended to delete or downgrade initiatives for the preservation of affirmative action, urban community development investments, outlays for reconstruction of South Central Los Angeles, and welfare assistance. These traditional liberal supports are being replaced by greatly intensified anticrime resources, workfare, health insurance, and family values.

The logic is laid out by Paul Starr who calls for an end to major supports for affirmative action policies, but who could be speaking for a much broader range of policies:

> With the positive effects of racial preferences have come many unhappy ones sustaining racism, stigmatizing much minority achievement as "merely" the result of affirmative action, creating a sense of grievance among whites who then feel entitled to discriminate, and

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> blocking the formation of bi-racial political alliances necessary to make progress against poverty.[33]

In other words, one strategy alternative is to perfect and enlarge upon economist Kenneth Arrow's proposition that universal benefits or "everybody wins" social policies are much more likely to succeed than are policies centered upon compensation or investments aimed at subdominant minorities or socioeconomic groups.[34] This strategy entails a search for ways to increase marginal returns for parts of the ruling white elites by reducing observable alliances with those who have been internally colonized long ago and who cannot mobilize the larger mass of impoverished voters anyway. The DLC strategy does not ignore African American policy concerns or leave this pivotal constituency outside of its proposals, but its universalism means that African Americans will never be able to catch up to whites within the polity, let alone to exert power as a singularly strategic constituency.

A second, alternative strategy stems in part from Myrdal's arguments for a unified bloc. The Civil Rights movement accomplished the revolution in the politics of Civil Rights. Parts of that movement were turning increasingly toward economic and foreign policy issues at the time it began its decline. Jaynes and Williams remark that there have been vigorous debates over the years about whether the movement will live on as a significant source of influence in policy-making or whether it will give way increasingly to the exercise of policy leadership by *elected* African Americans in concert with those who, like Vernon Jordan and Ronald Brown, have made their way into the White House and corporate boardrooms.

It seems unlikely that the movement will play a significant role in power relations in the 1990s. In 1986, in Washington's eighteen most prestigious law firms, 2 percent of the senior partners and 3.7 percent of the associates were black. And fewer than fifty individuals among the boards of the nation's thousand largest corporations were black. The numbers of power sources and power bases have grown, but not enough to be decisive and not enough to supplant the need for a social movement.

The most urgent and perplexing domestic policy issues for African Americans at both the federal and state levels continue to be employment, health care, welfare, and education. None of these

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most urgent issues puts the flint to a tinderbox of mass protest by subdominant ethnic or racial minorities, however. Each tends, thirty years after the greatest successes of the old movement, to have organizations and followers specialized around one issue, meaning that general-style ingathering is mostly a thing of the past. The old tools of the movement no longer have much efficacy, either. Marches, boycotts, freedom rides, pickets, and rallies have given way to film and television as the vehicles of power communications in the 1990s.

Protests of the older sort tend to be confined to single cities and counties today. The Black Panther Party, virtually liquidated by the police and the F.B.I. by the early 1970s, has been revived in a handful of cities, including Cleveland, Milwaukee, Oakland, and Los Angeles, and it continues the tradition of threats and armed vigilante activity in order to attract and mobilize ghetto support. Louis Farrakhan has intensified the involvement of Black Muslims in local protests, local organizing, and the use of the media to attract followers and reactions through the rhetoric of ethnic hatred. The comparative vigor of these activities within big cities suggests the extent to which millions of African Americans continue to feel politically dispossessed.

The second alternative, despite severe limitations, consists of renewing and redesigning the Civil Rights movement and of closely tying the new movement's leadership and carefully selected domestic policy issues with the growing cadre of African American Congressmen and with corporate, legal, medical, and academic elites who command resources for organization that far exceed what was available to the old movement. The strategy includes placing great tactical emphasis upon mass media communications and media-centered organizing practices now common to the most efficacious interest groups everywhere in America.

Today, interest groups can be manufactured somewhat at will. The organizational means are available as never before if subgroups of individuals coalesce enough to commit to work on single issues. Within civil society, the Black churches provided the institutional means for initiating the Civil Rights movement, and black college students formed a second wave of effective investors in organized power. These are not the most likely sources of civil agency initiatives for the 1990s or for the century ahead. Other sources will

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emerge under initiatives from an expanded stratum of highly educated, wealthy professional and commercial leaders.

The Executive Secretary of the NAACP, Benjamin Chavis, worked in 1993 and the first half of 1994 to expand very substantially the range of interests and other minority organizations with which the "new" NAACP seeks to co-align or at least collaborate on particular issues. His efforts included well-publicized outreaches to urban gang leaders and to the Nation of Islam. His board members split angrily over this approach, while old allies, including key leaders of the American Jewish establishment, dissociated themselves noisily from it. The Reverend Chavis was fired from his position by the Board of the NAACP in August 1994, ostensibly because he had spent organization funds to settle a civil suit brought by a former employee without Board notification or approval. Consequently, in October 1994, the NAACP was unable to meet its personnel payroll nationwide. If something approximating a social and political movement evolves from the brief effort by Chavis, it will probably require a new organizational framework, as the NAACP continues a decade-long slide toward collapse.

CONCLUSION

Because of both the increased participation by blacks in the national, state, and local polities and the social movement which shaped cultural norms of involvement so profoundly, American political life itself has been transformed. Political party strategies have shifted fundamentally, alliances and coalitions have changed, thousands of new leaders have emerged at all levels of government, and even foreign policy relations, especially in regard to South Africa, have changed profoundly.

Political power to define and establish domestic social policies has not kept pace with increases in the level and quality of participation among African Americans, however. And the progress in power shares that had been made was set back deliberately and successfully by Republican leaders from Nixon to Bush. Even if progress speeds up during the 1990s, African Americans will continue to lag behind in power shares as surely as they lag behind in level of employment, income, and education today. Nothing less than a recasting of the "political formula" will be required in the

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future, as the role of the nation-state gives way in the coming century to the role of the world political economy.

The emergence of that world system is a major source of the conflicts that are raging within so many societies today. Extreme dislocations and volatile transformations of production and exchange functions, transnational corporatism, high technology, and other emerging forces are also generating new levels of resistance to change and new degrees of intergroup tensions. The political sociology of the African American situation should therefore be studied in the decade ahead within the context of *world* rather than national or local events.

ENDNOTES

[1]Gerald David Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989).

[2]Aldon Morris, *Contemporary Sociology* 19 (5) (1990): 655.

[3]The term Negro is used in this paper when referring to the Myrdal era and book; the term black is used when drawing on reports which use that designation; and the term African American is adopted for all other portions of this work.

[4]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 508.

[5]Ibid., 511.

[6]Ibid., 513.

[7]*Smith* v *Allwright,* 321 US (1944): 661–62.

[8]It is interesting to note that a challenge to the status quo, such as the advent of the Cold War, diverts attention from domestic programs while a return to the status quo, i.e., the end of the Cold War, does not stimulate or renew concern with racial equality. There are, in other words, many events which distract us from domestic racial equality and thus reinforce white dominance, political and economic, while there are very few events or forces which foster movement toward distributive justice.

[9]Albert P. Blaustein and Robert L. Zangrando, eds., *Civil Rights and the Black American* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 575.

[10]Chandler Davidson, "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History," in Bernard Grofman and Chandler Davidson, eds., *Controversies in Minority Voting* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 39–42.

[11]Ibid., 43.

[12]Jaynes and Williams, eds., *A Common Destiny,* 235–36.

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[13]Bernard Grofman, "Expert Witness Testimony and the Evolution of Voting Rights Case Law," in Grofman and Davidson, eds., *Controversies in Minority Voting,* 197–229.

[14]Sheila Ards and Marjorie Lewis, "Vote Dilution Research: Methods of Analysis," *Trotter Review* 6 (2) (Fall 1992): 29.

[15]Laughlin McDonald, "The 1982 Amendments of Section 2 and Minority Representation," in Grofman and Davidson, eds., *Controversies in Minority Voting,* 74–75.

[16]Lani Guinier, "Voting Rights and Democratic Theory: Where Do We Go From Here?," in Grofman and Davidson, eds., *Controversies in Minority Voting,* 289.

[17]Clarence Lusane, "A Historic Moment: Black Voters and the 1992 Presidential Race," *Trotter Review* 6 (2) (Fall 1992): 9.

[18]This number is more than half of all black lawmakers who have served in Congress in the nation's history. This achievement includes the election of Carol Moseley Braun to the US Senate. Her success stemmed in part from substantial and widespread white voter support. State and local successes in 1992 were equally great in numbers and in political surprises. Among the latter, for example, Pamela Carter became attorney general of Indiana, and Jackie Barrett was elected sheriff of Fulton County, Georgia. Douglas Wilder's triumph in being elected Governor of Virginia in 1988, as well as David Dinkin's election as Mayor of New York City, suggest that we are entering an era where the color line will be breached more and more frequently.

[19]"Forty Blacks Now in Congress Can Help Blacks Get Ahead," *Jet,* 23 November 1992, 51.

[20]Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America's Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[21]Ralph C. Gomes and Linda Faye Williams, eds., *From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African-American Political Power* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992).

[22]Anthony J. Lemelle, "Review of Ralph C. Gomes and Linda Faye Williams, *From Exclusion to Inclusion: The Long Struggle for African-American Political Power* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992)," in *Contemporary Sociology* 22 (1) (January 1993): 63.

[23]Benjamin B. Ringer and Elinor R. Lawless, *Race-Ethnicity and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

[24]Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2 (3) (July 1957): 201–15.

[25]Robert A. Dahl, "Americans Struggle to Cope with a New Political Order That Works in Opaque and Mysterious Ways," in University of California Institute of Governmental Studies, *Public Affairs Report* 34 (5) (September 1993): 1–6.

[26]Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1967), 5–6.

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[27]Robert A. Dentler, "The Los Angeles Riots of Spring 1992: Events, Causes, and Future Policy," *Sociological Practice Review* 3 (4) (1992): 229–44.

[28]John Rex and David Mason, eds., *Theories of Race and Race Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[29]Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[30]Bob Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Davidson, "The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History"; and Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1974).

[31]Alex Willingham, "Voting Policy and Voter Participation: The Legacy of the 1980s," *Trotter Review* 6 (2) (Fall 1992): 24–28.

[32]Albert P. Carderelli and Jack McDevitt, "Crime and Public Safety in Boston: An Overview," in Joseph R. Barresi and Joseph S. Slavet, eds., *Boston Update '94: A New Agenda for a New Century* (Boston, Mass.: University of Massachusetts at Boston, McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, April 1994).

[33]Paul Starr, "Civil Reconstruction: What to do Without Affirmative Action," *The American Prospect* (8) (Winter 1992): 13.

[34]William Julius Wilson endorses this strategy in several respects, giving it bi-racial respectability. See William Julius Wilson, "Race-Neutral Policies and the Democratic Coalition," *The American Prospect* (1) (Spring 1990).

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Ronald F. Ferguson

Shifting Challenges: Fifty Years of Economic Change Toward Black-White Earnings Equality

INTRODUCTION

WHEN GUNNAR MYRDAL published *An American Dilemma* in 1944 three of every four Negroes in the United States lived in the South where the reigning ideology, mirrored to a substantial degree in the nation at large, was white supremacy. Decade after decade, the leading proponents of white supremacy decreed that Negroes had neither the right nor the human potential to participate on a par with whites in the economic and political life of the nation. White citizens broadly subscribed to this dictum, as did many blacks. Consequently, a full eight decades after the formal abolition of slavery, social, political, and economic opportunities for Black Americans remained severely circumscribed.

In some ways, the South's racial caste system was more restrictive than the institution of slavery. As Myrdal wrote:

> Before Emancipation it was in the interest of the slave owners to use Negro slaves wherever it was profitable in handicraft and manufacture. After Emancipation no such proprietary interest protected Negro laborers from the desire of white workers to squeeze them out of skilled employment. They were gradually driven out and pushed down into the "Negro jobs," a category which has been more and more narrowly defined.[1]

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Consequently, in the early 1940s blacks trailed far behind whites on virtually every important social and economic indicator. They attended poorly equipped schools and for only half as many years as whites. The average black male earned less than half as much as his white coworker. He labored, more often than not, in the most menial and low-wage jobs, receiving less pay than white workers even when doing the same work. Such was the situation in 1944.

Fifty years later, in 1994, remnants of white supremacist ideology continue to color the thoughts and behaviors of whites and blacks alike, but the most pernicious customs are largely outdated and most are violations of federal law. Furthermore, beyond formal legal structures, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements have achieved for African Americans a presence in public affairs and elective offices that few would have thought possible at the time that Myrdal wrote.

Still, legacies from three centuries of enforced social and economic subordination abound: economic advantage and disadvantage still correlate with race much more than might happen by chance; social relations between the races remain clumsy, suspicious, and fragile. Moreover, tenets of conventional wisdom regarding the causes of economic inequality between blacks and whites are legacies of the past as well.

This essay reviews explanations for changes in earnings inequality between black and white males since the publication of *An American Dilemma.* In addition, it aims to inform conventional wisdom concerning sources and remedies for inequality between black and white labor force participants *in the 1990s and beyond.* This essay contends that the most strategically relevant fact for understanding and reducing remaining wage and employment differences between young black and white male adults is the following: the basic skills (e.g., basic reading and math skills) of young black male workers are not, on average, as well matched to shifting patterns in the market demand for labor as are the basic skills of young whites who have the same years of schooling and live in the same regions. For young males in their twenties and early thirties, research from the late 1980s and early 1990s suggests that economic disparities between blacks and whites due to differences in skills and behaviors outweigh those associated with other proximate causes.

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Measurable racial disparities in skill and commitment to work are complex manifestations of deep-rooted historical and contemporary social forces that produce self-fulfilling prophesies of poor performance for many African American youths and adults alike. These forces include the demeaning and discouraging messages that society delivers to black males as a group and the long tradition of excluding black workers from many positions for which they have had the qualifications. Discouraging messages that communicate low expectations to black male youths, buttressed by inadequate schools and talk "on the street" that the economic game is "rigged," foster skeptical and often half-hearted engagement by many black youths, and some adults as well, in "mainstream" activities that purport to prepare them for expanded opportunity.[2]

Substantially reducing racial disparity among young adults in the labor market requires supporting *and* holding accountable the institutions that should inspire, educate, and nurture African American children.[3] In addition, it requires continued vigilance against racial bias in the workplace that validates young people's expectations that the game is rigged against them even when they do their part to prepare and perform. Given the complexity of the social forces that affect the acquisition of skill and success in labor markets, and given that social forces are malleable, this author rejects any assertion that the remaining differences in skill among blacks and whites that this paper explores are genetically predetermined (as some pundits are again suggesting) or that society should acquiesce and be content to tolerate them.

PROGRESS FROM 1940–1975[4]

The period from 1940–1975 was one of substantial economic progress for blacks relative to whites. Each successive cohort of blacks after 1940 entered adulthood on a more equal social and educational footing with whites than the one before.[5] The dark diagonal line up the center of *Figure 1* represents the composite earnings ratio for sixteen to sixty-four year olds. The narrower and flatter lines portray the patterns for ten-year cohorts that entered the labor market during consecutive decades. The label on each line shows the decade that the cohort entered the adult labor force.

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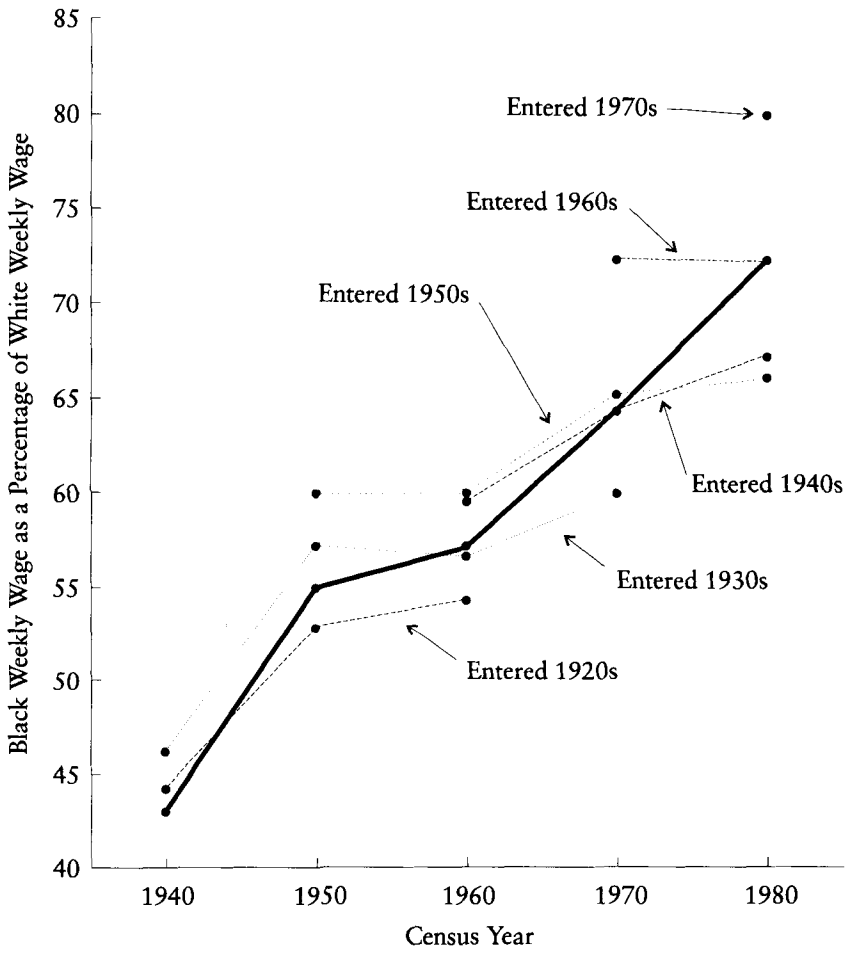
FIGURE 1. Black Weekly Wage as a Percentage of White Weekly Wage (Adult Males, 1940–1980)



Source: James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," *Journal of Economic Literature* XXVII (2) (June 1989), constructed from data in table 8.

Figure 1 shows that improvement for blacks relative to whites came from progress both within and between cohorts. However, the pattern was uneven over time. The 1940s saw rapid relative progress because heavy demand for labor during World War II broke down barriers that in the past had excluded blacks from certain jobs. The 1950s were relatively flat within cohorts but the

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composite pattern was slightly positive because the young men who entered the market had higher relative earnings (i.e., relative to their white peers) than did the older men who retired. The 1960s produced progress for all cohorts, while the 1970s saw progress through mid-decade and then a decline. Hence, the decade ended with relative wage levels for individual cohorts roughly where they began in 1970. Nevertheless, successive cohorts continued to move ahead of those before them. The cohort that entered during the 1970s had wages that were higher relative to those of whites in 1980 than for any previous cohort—over 80 percent.[6]

Three clusters of explanations seem to account for black economic progress relative to whites between 1940 and 1975: black migration away from Southern states and rural areas; improvements in the quality and quantity of schooling that blacks received; and the dismantling of discriminatory barriers in labor markets.

Migration

The fact that many blacks lived in the rural South—the poorest region in the nation—helps to explain why the black-white wage gap for the nation was greater than 50 percent in 1940. In 1940, 90.6 percent of blacks in the United States had been born in the South and 74.8 percent still lived there.[7] Only 28 percent of the nation's whites were Southerners.

From 1940 through the mid-1960s, blacks abandoned the rural South in massive numbers. They found greater economic opportunity in the urban South and in the cities of other regions. The large difference between what blacks could earn in the South versus other regions was not, however, a permanent condition. Regional differences in the quality of opportunity narrowed substantially after the mid-1960s.

For example, analyses of annual data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) demonstrate that wage rates for black men in the South in 1965 were still 35 percent below those for whites of the same age and the same years of schooling. Outside of the South, the analogous gap was 17 percent.[8] By 1973, the gap for the South had shrunk to between 19 and 20 percent. The percentage difference for blacks in other regions had moved by less than 2 percentage points. Curiously, and suddenly, the data show a large positive spike in relative improvement for blacks outside the South between 1973

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and 1975.[9] During these two years, the black-white wage gap outside the South was cut in half, from near 16 percent down to 8 percent. By 1980, however, the gap outside the South had returned to its 1973 level. Nearly all of the sustained wage gains for black men relative to white men in the fifteen years from 1965 through 1980 occurred in the South.[10] In addition, wage levels in the South for all racial groups, including whites, were slowly catching up with those in the rest of the nation.[11]

Hence, the economic incentive for blacks to leave the South decreased rather dramatically after 1965. The direction of migration reversed during the 1970s with a small net migration back to the South. Today, roughly half of all Black Americans live in the South and over 80 percent live in urban areas.

Younger cohorts of blacks in the South migrated away in larger numbers than did their elders. This helped to increase their wages more rapidly relative to whites. Overall, migrants out of the South comprised 14.6 percent of Southern blacks during the 1940s, 13.7 percent during the 1950s, and 11.9 percent during the 1960s.[12] These numbers are lower than those for twenty to twenty-four year olds. Net migration figures show that 26.3 percent of the South's twenty to twenty-four year old black males left the South in the 1940s, 24.5 percent left in the 1950s, and 19.3 percent left in the 1960s.[13]

James Smith and Finis Welch estimate that migration boosted the black-white wage ratio by 20 percent between 1940 and 1970 for young men with five or fewer years of work experience.[14] The gains were smaller for older cohorts who migrated in smaller numbers.

Schooling

There is little agreement concerning how to best measure school quality. It is clear, however, that the gross differences in resources available to black and white children in the South in the earlier part of the twentieth century could not possibly have provided them with equal opportunities to learn.

When Gunnar Myrdal wrote *An American Dilemma,* disparities in educational resources for black and white children in the South were diminishing, but they were still large. David Card and Alan Krueger have assembled data that show average pupil/teacher ratios, term length, and teacher pay for eighteen segregated states

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between 1915 and 1966. These disparities were not inadvertent. For example, Myrdal quotes from a report on teacher salaries:

> An additional argument in favor of the salary differential [between black and white teachers] is the general tradition of the South that negroes and whites are not to be paid equivalent salaries for equivalent work. . . .The custom is one. . .that the practical school administrator must not ignore.[15]

Figure 2 shows the patterns that Card and Krueger document.[16] In 1915, black students tolerated classes that were nearly twice as large as those that whites enjoyed. They attended school only two-thirds as many days as did whites. Furthermore, black teachers earned less than half of what white teachers earned. The fifty years between 1915 and 1965 saw hard-fought battles for educational equity. Those battles produced convergence in at least some measures of school quality. *Figure 2* shows that by 1965 black schools in the South had achieved near parity on pupil/teacher ratios, term length, and teacher pay.

This convergence along several dimensions of school quality helps to explain why younger cohorts in the labor market did better both absolutely and relative to whites than did their elders.[17]

Card and Krueger present evidence of a link between the school resource variables in *Figure 2*—pupil/teacher ratios, term length, and teacher pay—and later earnings for men who attended the Southern schools that *Figure 2* represents. Specifically, Card and Krueger estimate rates of return to additional years of schooling for men in nine Northern states in 1960, 1970, and 1980 who were born and educated in the South. They show that state-by-state differences between blacks and whites in the economic return to an additional year of schooling are correlated with black-white differences in schooling resources in the Southern states at the times that the men attended school.

Figure 3 shows one of the patterns that their work reveals. The vertical axis shows the black-white difference in the percentage increase in income associated with an additional year of schooling. The horizontal axis shows the black-white difference in average pupil-teacher ratios. While the pattern in the diagram does not prove causation, the correlation is clearly negative: smaller class sizes appear to increase the value of an additional year of schooling.

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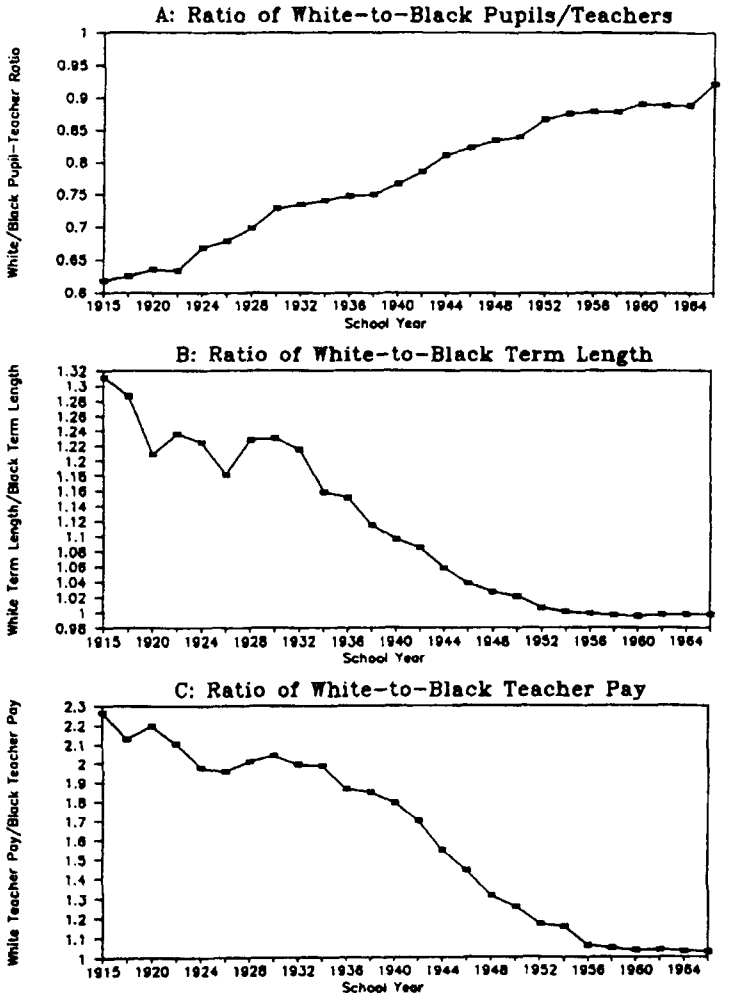
FIGURE 2. Relative School Quality in Eighteen Segregated States, 1915–1966


A: Ratio of White-to-Black Pupils/Teachers
White/Black Pupil-Teacher Ratio
School Year
B: Ratio of White-to-Black Term Length
White Term Length/Black Term Length
School Year
C: Ratio of White-to-Black Teacher Pay
White Teacher Pay/Black Teacher Pay
School Year

Source: David Card and Alan B. Krueger, "School Quality and Black-White Relative Earnings: A Direct Assessment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992).

During the period from 1960 to 1980, the relative rate of return to an extra year of schooling for black men educated in the South and working in the North was higher for younger cohorts than for older ones. The rate of return to schooling for the younger cohorts

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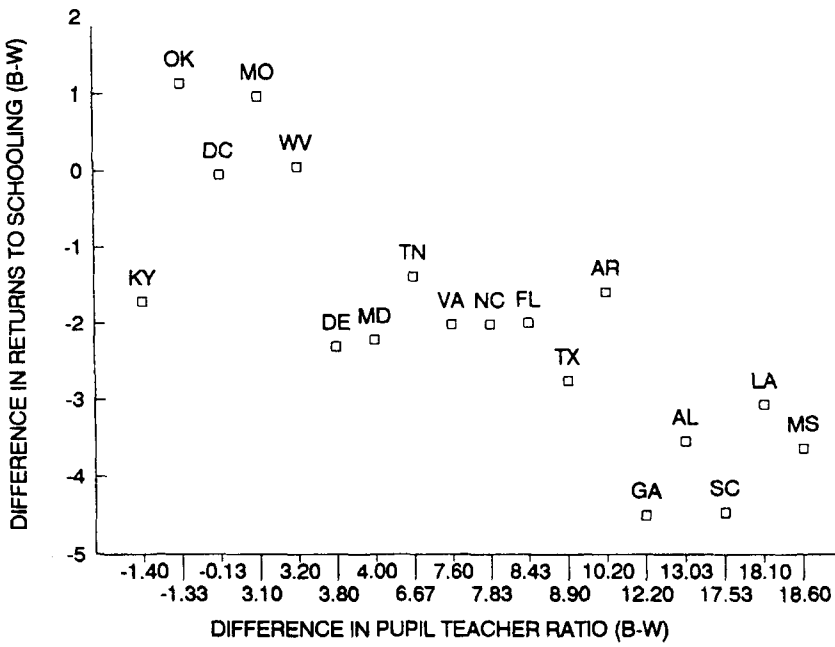
of Southern-born blacks was higher not only relative to whites but relative to Northern-born blacks as well. This increase as compared with Northern-born blacks who worked in the same Northern labor markets suggests that the gain for Southern blacks between 1960 and 1980 was not due simply to Civil Rights pressures on employers. These pressures would presumably have affected all blacks living in the North in a similar way, regardless of the region of their birth. Instead, Card and Krueger argue, the higher rates of return to schooling for the younger cohorts reflect improvements in the relative quality of the schools that younger cohorts of Southern-born blacks attended. In addition, the increasing quality of the schools that black youths in the South attended probably helps to explain why younger cohorts chose to attend school longer.

FIGURE 3. Difference in Rate of Return to Schooling Versus Difference in Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Men Born in 1910–1939 in the South)



Source: David Card and Alan B. Krueger, "School Quality and Black-White Relative Earnings: A Direct Assessment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992).

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Indeed, the gain in years of schooling for blacks in the United States after 1940 is truly impressive. Since the majority of blacks lived in the South, the national pattern reflects Southern progress disproportionately. In 1940, the average sixteen to sixty-four year old black male in the United States had only 4.70 years of schooling. The average for whites was 9.38. By 1980, average years of schooling had risen to 12.50 for whites and 11.00 for blacks. For the youngest adults, the difference by 1980 was less than one year.[18] Not only was the gap in average years of schooling closing, the gap in what an extra year of schooling contributed to earning power was closing as well. Some estimates show that blacks and whites with fewer than fifteen years of work experience had virtually the same rate of return to an additional year of schooling in 1980.[19]

Civil Rights

While some effects of the Civil Rights movement on relative earnings may have begun before 1960, most probably came afterward. The topics addressed above—migration, improvements in school quality, and more years in school—leave roughly one-third to one-half of the gain in relative earnings for blacks between 1960 and 1980 unexplained.[20] Research on the link between black economic progress and the Civil Rights movement has not produced a definitive estimate of how important affirmative action and Civil Rights enforcement were to black economic gains after 1960. We know, for example, that black employment increased in firms that were federal contractors and subject to federal affirmative action requirements. This improvement was concentrated in the South where black wage gains were greatest.[21] In addition, we know that relative improvements in black earnings between 1960 and 1980 were concentrated between the late 1960s and the early 1970s when formal and informal pressures to provide equal employment opportunity were especially strong. What we do not know with any precision is what percentage of observed improvements in employment outcomes for blacks were due to these and other Civil Rights pressures. Given that one-third to one-half of the gains after 1960 are not otherwise easily explained, the impact may have been substantial.

However important federal pressure may have been, the period of advancement in labor market outcomes for black males ended, at least temporarily, in the mid-1970s.

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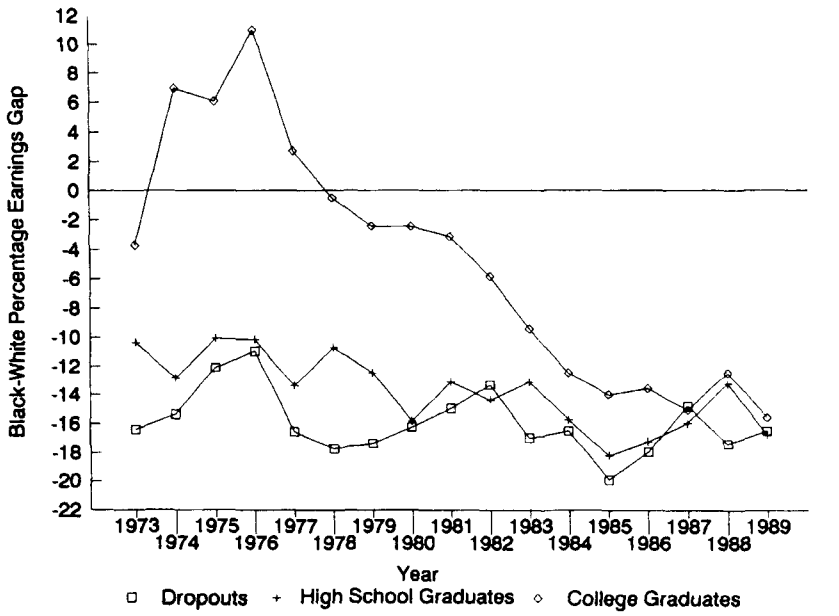
THE LACK OF PROGRESS AFTER 1975

By 1975, black males had earnings that were within 8 percentage points of those for whites who shared the same patterns of working and had equal years of schooling.[22] Since the mid-1970s, however, the level of wage disparity between black and white males older than forty-five years of age has been roughly constant. Disparity among younger males has increased, with younger blacks falling further behind.[23] The possible reasons are complex and not fully understood.[24]

FIGURE 4. Black-White Percentage Earnings Gap by Level of Schooling (Young Men with Fewer than Ten Years of Experience)



Source: John Bound and Richard B. Freeman, "What Went Wrong? The Erosion of Relative Earnings and Employment Among Young Black Men in the 1980s," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992).

The CPS provides the data that researchers use most commonly to track annual changes in earnings and employment. Based upon analyses of CPS data, several authors have reported the decline in relative earnings for young black males.[25] *Figures 4* and *5* show the

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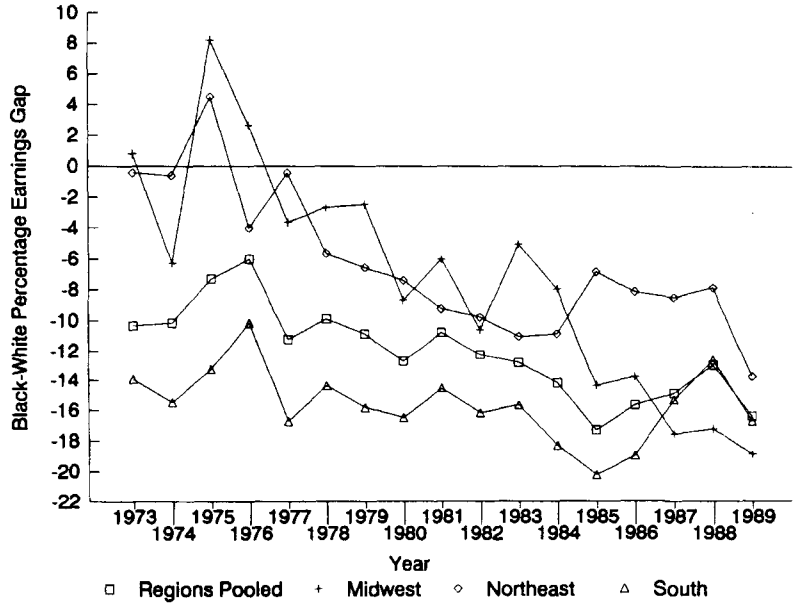
percentage gap since 1973 between blacks and whites (black minus white) in usual weekly earnings, holding constant years of schooling and potential experience.[26] *Figure 6* shows employment-to-population ratios for men with fewer than twelve, exactly twelve, and exactly sixteen years of schooling. All of the numbers in *Figures 4*, *5*, and *6* are for young men eighteen years old and older, with nine or fewer years of labor market experience.[27]

FIGURE 5. Black-White Percentage Earnings Gap by Region (Young Men with High School or Less Education and Fewer than Ten Years of Experience)



Source: John Bound and Richard B. Freeman, "What Went Wrong? The Erosion of Relative Earnings and Employment Among Young Black Men in the 1980s," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992).

Figures 4 and *5* show that the pattern of change differed across regions and for men with different amounts of schooling. The greatest deterioration in relative earnings was for groups that experienced the most equality in the mid-1970s: college graduates, men in the Midwest, and, to a lesser extent, men in the Northeast.

Figure 6 shows that the employment-to-population ratio deteriorated at least slightly for all but white college graduates after the

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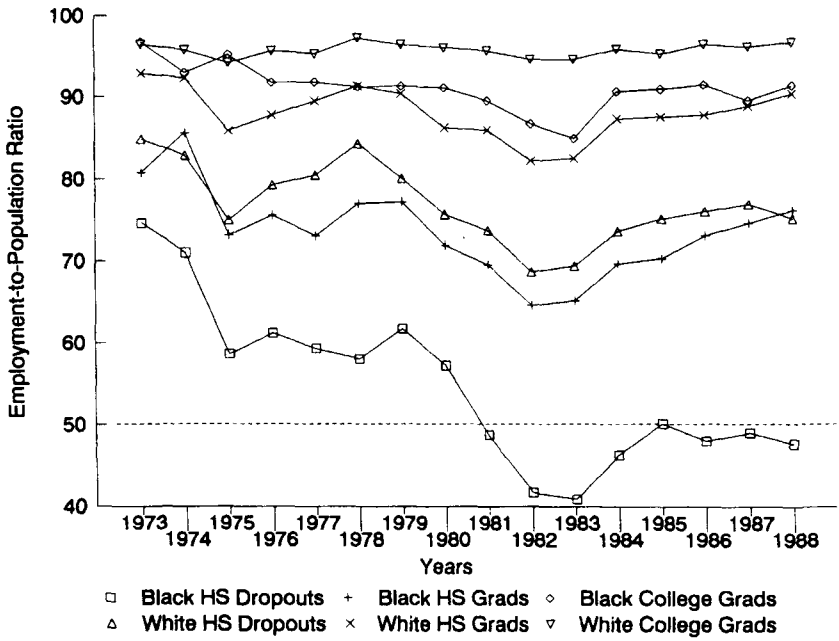
mid-1970s.[28] However, the only group with large and perhaps permanent deterioration in its position—diverging sharply from employment levels of the mid-1970s—are black high school dropouts. *Figure 6* shows no time after 1981 when more than 50 percent of black male dropouts in this age range were employed.

FIGURE 6. Employment-to-Population Ratios by Levels of Schooling (Black and White Males with Fewer than Ten Years of Experience)



Source: Current Population Survey, tabulations by John Bound.

Increased Demand for Skill

A partial explanation for the increasing wage disparity between young blacks and whites after the mid-1970s is an increase in the demand for, and the price of, skill.[29] Even though it appears that the gap in skill has been closing,[30] the "price of skill" (defined below) may have been growing more rapidly during this period than the racial gap in skill has been closing.[31]

Consider a hypothetical example. Imagine that points on a particular test are a good measure of proficiency in basic reading and

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math skills. Employers buy (or, more accurately, rent) these skills by hiring employees to use their skills in the workplace. In effect, employers are bidding against one another for employees with good basic skills. The "price" of "ten points worth of skill" is the difference in wage rates that the employer pays for the skills associated with the ten points. If the "price of skill" were $0.10 per point in 1980 and rose to $0.25 per point by 1990, then two otherwise identical people whose test scores were ten points apart could expect the difference in their wages to rise from $1.00 per hour in 1980 to $2.50 per hour by 1990. If the test score gap closed from ten points in 1980 to become, say, seven points in 1990, then the gap in wages would not grow as much, but it would grow nevertheless. For the wage gap to remain constant at $1.00 in this example, the gap in test scores would have to fall from ten in 1980 to four in 1990.

Why do we believe that the market value of skill has risen? One piece of evidence is that the gap in earnings between high school and college graduates grew on the order of 1 percent per year during the 1980s.[32] Card and Krueger report that the percentage gap in earnings between blacks and whites with equal years of schooling tends to move up and down as the percentage gap in earnings between high school and college graduates rises and falls.[33] Another reason to believe that the market value of skill has risen is that differences in wages predicted by differences in test scores that measure basic reading and math skills have, by some estimates, grown. This evidence of the increasing importance of test scores as predictors of earnings, however, is based on data that are not completely appropriate.[34] Hence, while the story is quite plausible, the question remains open among researchers.

Skill-Biased Economic Change

Changes in the economy that have differential impacts on workers according to their proficiencies in relevant skills are examples of what I call "skill-biased economic changes." Employment in the United States has been falling in the public sector and in jobs protected by unions. Public-sector and union jobs tend to insulate workers from head-to-head competition based on proficiency. At the same time, competition from immigrants and foreign workers for the least skilled jobs that pay the lowest wages has been increas-

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ing. This increase in the supply of low-skilled labor suppresses the wage rate and thereby increases the cost to any given worker of not having better skills. Better skills could earn him or her a job in a segment of the labor market not affected so much by immigration. In addition, modernization in both manufacturing and service-sector technology is requiring new modes of workplace organization that entail more learning on the job, more responsibility among workers for managing technology, more reading of manuals, more writing of reports, and more working in groups.[35] These trends appear to be increasing the demand for both cognitive and social skills, thereby increasing wage differences between people at different skill levels.

John Bound and Richard Freeman attempt to measure the degree to which some of the factors listed above help to predict the trends shown in *Figures 4* and *5*.[36] The factors that they study include changes over time in location patterns, industrial and occupational employment shares, unionism, and the real value of the minimum wage. All may be causes or consequences of changes in the price of skill, as defined above, and associated increases in economic disparity. *Table 1* summarizes their findings. The "Average Annual Change" at the top of each column represents the average annual change from 1973 through 1989 of average weekly earnings for blacks as a percentage of those for whites, holding constant years of schooling and potential experience. Rows 1 through 5 show how much of the "Average Annual Change" Bound and Freeman estimate may be associated with each respective category of explanatory variables.

The "Average Annual Change" is most negative for college graduates (-1.547 percent per year) and for men in the Midwest with twelve or fewer years of schooling (-1.424 percent per year). The most important factor in the Midwest is industry, which explains the disproportionate shift of young black men in the Midwest out of manufacturing jobs as manufacturing plants closed in the central cities where blacks were most concentrated. The biggest drop for college educated men is associated with occupation. Numbers not shown here demonstrate that 80 percent of the effect of occupation reflects greater shifts into lower-wage occupations for college educated blacks than for college educated whites, and 20 percent reflects reductions in the wages of occupations that blacks already

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tended to occupy more than whites in the early 1970s. However, even after all of the categories of variables are included, 59 percent of the trend for college graduates remains unexplained in the Bound and Freeman analysis.

The trend in earnings inequality for black dropouts in *Table 1* is not as negative as that for high school and college graduates. Indeed, the fall in the real value of the minimum wage alone is sufficient to account for the trend. This, however, is not the most important story for black dropouts. First, white dropouts experienced a large amount of erosion in the inflation-adjusted value of their weekly earnings, so the fact that blacks did almost as well as whites is not grounds for solace. Second, recall the divergent employment trend for black high school dropouts in *Figure 6*. It appears that changes in the relative demand for black labor appeared more through changes in weekly earnings (*Figure 4*) for men with high school and college educations and through falling employment rates for high school dropouts (*Figure 6*).

TABLE 1. Annual Change in Black-White Earnings Gap as a Percentage of White Earnings (Males with Fewer than Ten Years of Experience, 1973–1989)

	Level of Education				Region (High School Education or Less)		
	Total	College Graduate	High School Graduate	Dropout	Midwest	Northeast	South
Column:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Average Annual Change	-0.565	-1.547	-0.449	-0.208	-1.424	-0.797	-0.241
1. Due to Location	-0.062	-0.167	-0.041	0.109	-0.188	-0.311	-0.014
2. Due to Industry	-0.058	-0.108	-0.046	-0.106	-0.455	-0.140	0.062
3. Due to Occupation	-0.109	-0.296	-0.157	0.018	-0.162	-0.042	-0.106
4. Due to Unionism	-0.027	-0.024	-0.046	-0.047	-0.126	-0.108	-0.058
5. Due to Minimum Wage	-0.097	-0.042	-0.120	-0.203	-0.101	-0.034	-0.181
Total of Lines 1-5	-0.353	-0.637	-0.410	-0.229	-1.132	-0.624	-0.185

Source: Adapted from estimates presented in John Bound and Richard B. Freeman, "What Went Wrong? The Erosion of Relative Earnings and Employment Among Young Black Men in the 1980s," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992): table III, 213.

An important source of job competition for black dropouts is immigration. Immigration is a skill-biased economic phenomenon

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because it has different effects on workers at different skill levels. Immigrants have increased the supply of labor in low-wage low-skill segments of the labor market. One study estimates that legal and illegal immigrants together comprised a group equal to 17 percent of high school dropouts in 1975.[37] This number nearly doubled to 31 percent by 1985. The same study found that the number of high school dropouts apparently displaced by net imports to manufacturing grew from 1.5 percent to 12 percent over the same period. These numbers are large enough to be partly responsible for the deterioration in employment that less skilled young workers, especially black dropouts, experienced between 1975 and 1985.

The queuing theory of labor demand helps to explain what may be happening to young black males. This theory posits that employers hire from the front of an implicit labor queue. The applicants whom the employer expects will be most desirable as employees are at the front of the queue. The workers whom the employer expects will be less productive or otherwise less desirable are at the back of the queue. Employers will hire them last, if at all.

If employers hire from the front of the queue, and if blacks are disproportionately at the back—behind immigrants and native-born members of other racial groups—then blacks will suffer the greatest deterioration in employment when the number of immigrants grows. Precise estimates of the effect that immigration has on employment for black dropouts are not available. Nevertheless, growth in the size of the immigrant labor force probably helps to explain the trend in employment-to-population ratios for black high school dropouts shown in *Figure 6*.

A more disaggregated set of industrial and occupational categories in the study by Bound and Freeman would probably have explained an even larger percentage of the trends in earnings inequality. Nevertheless, even at the levels of aggregation that they used, Bound and Freeman identified an increasing propensity after 1973 for blacks to occupy less lucrative occupations and to work in industries that offered lower pay. For high school dropouts, some of this appears to be the consequence of increasing competition from immigrants. For high school graduates and college graduates, further analysis suggests that some of the shifting across occupations and industries may be the consequence of changing skill

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requirements and differences in how well blacks versus whites meet those requirements. In addition, a non-trivial share of this shifting is almost certainly the consequence of declining pressure for affirmative action.

Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

Declining pressures by the federal government and by other parts of society for equal employment opportunity and for affirmative action probably account for some of the industry and occupation effects in *Table 1*, as well as for some of the trends that remain unexplained. During the early 1970s, affirmative outreach for young minority workers, especially college graduates, was in style. The Civil Rights movement and the federal laws and regulations that resulted from that movement significantly reduced the possibility that past customs of racial exclusion could go unquestioned during the 1960s and early 1970s. Many employers in the late 1960s and early 1970s probably responded to the mood of the times and "voluntarily"—without court orders or contract compliance obligations—hired blacks into positions that they had reserved for whites in the past.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and President Johnson's Executive Order 11246 provided official enforcement powers to the federal government. With these powers, the government put pressure on firms that discriminated against racial minorities and also on federal contractors who may in the past have had no concern for racial balance. Acting under the provisions of Title VII, federal courts awarded damages against firms convicted of racial bias. For example, the famous case of *Griggs* v. *Duke Power Company* put the business community on notice that even the appearance of a discriminatory motive—use of an exam that had a racially disproportionate impact and without sufficient job relatedness—could put them at risk for heavy fines and penalties.

Pressures for affirmative action by federal contractors waned during the 1980s. According to Jonathan Leonard, who has studied these issues extensively, "...affirmative action under the contract compliance program virtually ceased to exist in all but name after 1980."[38] As partial evidence, Leonard points out that the black share of employment in the early 1980s grew more rapidly in firms that were not federal contractors than in firms that were. He

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remarks, "It was as though contractors were returning to a growth path they had been forced off by previous affirmative action efforts."

It is no secret that economic opportunity for racial minorities was not a priority during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Neither, for that matter, were these issues as focal during the Carter administration of the late 1970s as they had been during the Johnson administration of the late 1960s. Hence, even in the absence of changes in the actual performance of federal enforcement agencies, it seems reasonable to expect that employers after the late 1970s may have, as Leonard suggests, largely returned to the patterns that they would have followed in the absence of federal pressure.

Changes from the 1970s to the 1980s in the relative occupational distributions of young blacks and whites are consistent with this interpretation. In the 1970s, young black college graduates were as likely as their white counterparts to be in managerial and professional occupations. By the late 1980s, they were 13 percent less likely than young whites to be in these occupations.[39] Black high school graduates lost ground as well. In the 1970s, young blacks had more than their share of jobs as operatives but fewer than their share of craftworker positions. By the late 1980s, the percentage of young black workers in operatives was the same as that for whites, and blacks had lost even further ground as craftworkers.[40]

THE IMPORTANCE OF SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS

Audit studies of hiring practices that send equally qualified blacks and whites to apply for the same job openings find that whites receive more job offers by small but nevertheless important margins of difference.[41] The need to comply with caste-based custom, however, is no longer a standard explanation as it may have been fifty years ago. Instead, both employers who discriminate and many researchers who seek to explain employers' behaviors usually point to what researchers call "statistical discrimination."[42]

By definition, statistical discrimination based on race is when employers use race as a signal of potential productivity and hire whites over blacks even when the two appear otherwise equal. In any particular example, an employer's assumption that race is a valid signal of skills and behaviors may be correct, or not. Still, if he

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expects on average to be correct, he will continue the practice. While this practice may be rational for employers, statistical discrimination is illegal and unfair to its victims who must prove that they are exceptions to the stereotype.

It is true that young black males *on average* rank lower than whites on dimensions that are unobservable to employers at the time of hiring but that help to predict later productivity on the job. These characteristics that are initially "invisible" may sometimes include basic reading and math skills as well as some employment behaviors, such as absenteeism and the propensity to quit.[43] Attempting to change employers' screening strategies without also changing the workers' skills and behaviors that produce and confirm those strategies is an expensive and potentially unworkable policy both for employers and for society at large. Conversely, permitting employers to practice a strategy of statistical discrimination is unfair to those it unjustly excludes from jobs. From a societal perspective, neither alternative is desirable.

Basic Skills and Wages

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) provides the only nationally representative data that include measures of basic reading and math skills as well as the variables that researchers need in order to estimate standard wage and employment equations. The NLSY began in 1979 with a sample of twelve thousand fourteen to twenty-two year old respondents. Half were males. Interviewers have revisited the original sample each year since 1979. Ninety-five percent of the sample completed the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) in 1980. Here, I report results using a composite score called the Armed Forces Qualifications Test (AFQT). The AFQT is calculated by summing the scaled scores from tests of mathematic reasoning, word knowledge, reading comprehension, and half the score from a speed test of numerical operations. It is essentially a test of basic reading and math proficiencies.

Several authors have written recently concerning how well the AFQT score helps in predicting otherwise unexplained differences between blacks and whites in hourly wage rates.[44] In an analysis conducted for this paper, wage rates for 1988–1992[45] were based on the reported earnings for the "current or most recent job" for each of the five years[46] of 1,731 men (1,122 white and 609 black)

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aged twenty-three to thirty-five. For the present set of estimates, the wage from the most recent job at the time of the interview is averaged across the five years.[47]

The estimates that form the basis of this discussion include controls for years of schooling, census region, area of residence (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural), and years of potential experience.[48] This is the same type of procedure that Bound and Freeman used in estimating the numbers that *Figures 4* and *5* report.[49]

Results.[50] When our estimates do not include the AFQT score among the explanatory variables, the estimated wage differences between blacks and whites closely resemble those that Bound and Freeman found (see *Figures 4* and *5*) for the late 1980s in their analysis of data from the CPS. When test scores are not controlled, the unexplained racial difference in earnings for the late 1980s is between 13 and 20 percent in their analysis using the CPS as well as in my analysis using the NLSY. One-half to three-quarters of this difference disappears, however, once differences in basic skills, as measured by the AFQT, are taken into account.

Figure 7 shows three different methods of demonstrating the importance of reading and math skills (AFQT scores) in accounting for black-white differences in hourly earnings. Each panel of *Figure 7* shows two bars. The longer bar in each panel is from estimates that exclude the AFQT score and the shorter bar is from estimates that include it.[51]

Regression coefficients estimated from the data for a given racial group reflect the "rules" in the market that determine wage rates for members of that group. We can use the rules estimated for one group to simulate what the average wage rate would be for the other group, if the second group were subject to the same treatment in the market as the first. Panels A and B of *Figure 7* rely on this technique.

For example, "treating blacks as whites," for purposes of prediction, means taking the rules estimated on the data for whites and applying those rules to the raw data for blacks. This simulates what the average wage would be for blacks if the market treated them as whites. An analogous statement applies for treating whites as blacks.

Panels A and B of *Figure 7* show that the apparent differential in the consequences of being treated as black versus being treated as white diminishes when the AFQT is included in the analysis. With-

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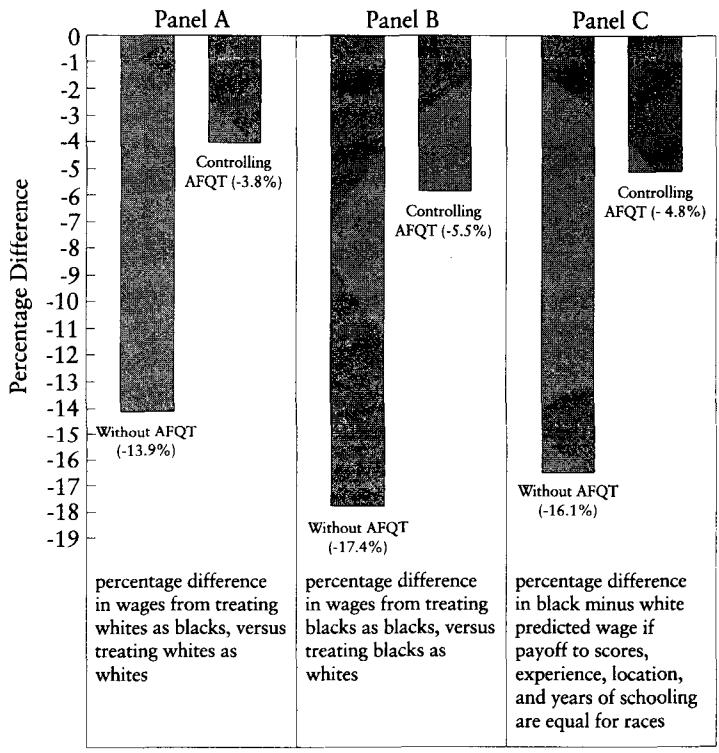
out the AFQT, whites who are treated as blacks have predicted wages that are 13.9 percent lower, and blacks who are treated as blacks have wages that are almost 17.4 percent lower than if they were treated as whites.[52] Including the AFQT brings these differences down to -3.8 for whites and to -5.5 for blacks.

FIGURE 7. Difference in Wage (in percentage) if Treated as Black Versus if Treated as White (Males Aged 23–35, 1988–1992)



Note: Length of each bar is shown in parenthesis.
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, calculations by Ronald F. Ferguson.

Panel C of *Figure 7* uses the same estimation procedure that Bound and Freeman used. It uses equations that pool blacks and whites together and includes a variable that captures the black-white difference in earnings that is otherwise not accounted for. The close similarity between Panel C and the other two panels of *Figure 7* shows that regressions that pool the races together and use

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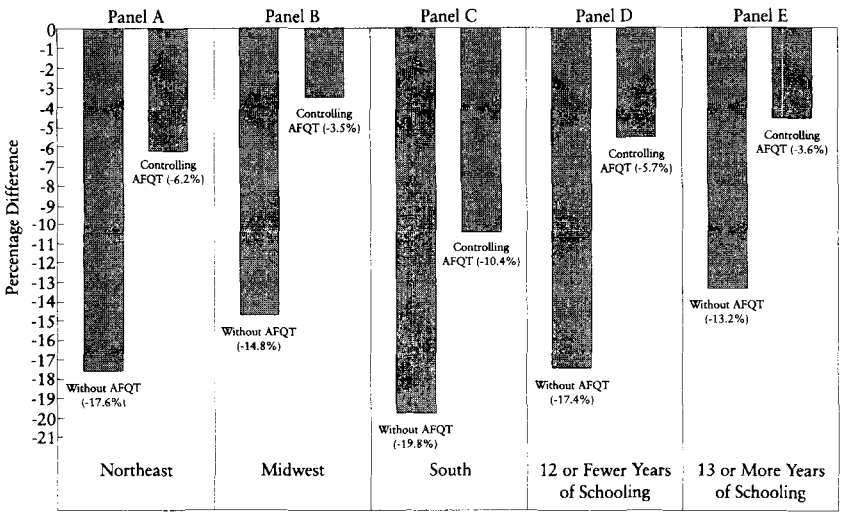
a variable to capture the unexplained racial difference, as in Panel C, produce essentially the same results as the more cumbersome procedure of estimating separate equations for the racial groups, as in Panels A and B.[53] Without including the AFQT, Panel C estimates that the unexplained gap between blacks and whites is 16.1 percent. With the AFQT, it becomes 4.8 percent.[54]

Figure 8 applies the method that Panel C uses in *Figure 7*, but for separate regions and education levels. Panels A, B, and C of *Figure 8* use a separate equation for each region.[55] The AFQT score predicts roughly two-thirds of the remaining black-white wage gap in the Northeast, three-fourths of the remaining gap in the Midwest, and half of the remaining gap in the South. The South has the largest remaining gap: 10 percent after controlling for the AFQT in the analysis and 20 percent before.[56]

FIGURE 8. Black-White Percent Difference in Wage Rate (Males Aged 23–35, 1988–1992)



Note: The length of each bar is shown in parenthesis.
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, calculations by Ronald F. Ferguson.

Panels D and E in *Figure 8* show results separately for men with twelve or fewer years of schooling and for men with thirteen or more years. The estimated gap in earnings before the AFQT is in the

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analysis is -17.4 percent for men with twelve or fewer years of schooling. Introducing the AFQT reduces the gap to -5.7 percent—a reduction of two-thirds. For men with thirteen or more years of schooling, the gap of -13.2 percent before including the AFQT drops to -3.6 percent afterwards—a plunge of almost three-quarters.[57]

Figures 7 and *8* show that reading and math skills measured by the AFQT are important predictors of black-white wage differences. *Figures 4* and *5* show that the greatest erosion in relative earnings after 1973 was outside the South, in the Midwest and Northeast, and for college graduates. The gaps that *Figure 8* displays, after taking the AFQT into account, are too small to support the proposition that the erosion after the mid-1970s was mostly the result of increasing racial bias. Instead, the erosion probably results from some combination of the following: an increase in the market value of skill (e.g., the types of skills that the AFQT measures); or the deflation of an affirmative-action "bubble" that temporarily inflated wages for young blacks to be above those of whites with similar skills in the 1970s. These interpretations are not inconsistent with those in the Bound and Freeman analysis. With an average wage gap of roughly 5 percent in 1988–1992 (see *Figure 7*), an explanation of the trends in *Figures 4* and *5* that rests on increased discrimination simply is not plausible.

Skills, Behaviors, Incarceration, and Work[58]

The typical African American male works fewer weeks per year than his white male counterpart (see *Figure 6*). The analysis below uses the NLSY to test several hypotheses concerning differences in employment between blacks and whites aged twenty-three to thirty-one who had thirteen or fewer years of schooling in 1986–1988. Together, these hypotheses account for virtually all of the disparity in weeks worked per year between the least skilled young black and white males in the NLSY sample. Using no explanatory variables other than location and schooling leaves an unexplained black-white difference of about three months per year, with blacks working less.[59] With a number of additional explanatory variables included, the remaining unexplained difference is on the order of one to three weeks per year for men in the least complex jobs. This difference is not statistically distinguishable from zero. The differ-

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ence is larger for more complex blue-collar jobs. Before explaining this statement, the other explanatory variables in the analysis must be introduced.

Measures of both skill and behavior in this analysis help in predicting black-white differences in employment for young men with fewer than thirteen years of schooling. Clearly, these differences in skill and behavior are associated with differences in schools, family backgrounds, youth peer cultures, and other pre-labor-market institutions. The lack of equal opportunity for employment success may begin even before black youths enter the labor market, causing them to enter the market less well prepared than their white counterparts.

Skills. Skill-related measures in the analysis of weeks worked per year include not only the AFQT score, but also the NLSY interviewer's rating of the respondent's comprehension during the interview, and a complexity rating for the respondent's occupation in the year before the analysis.[60] All three—the test score, the interviewer's rating, and the occupational complexity rating—come from an earlier year. Each is a statistically significant predictor of weeks worked and helps to explain racial disparity in employment for young males. Black-white differences in the AFQT score predict roughly three weeks less employment per year for blacks, and the interviewer's rating predicts an additional one week less, for a total of one month from these two sources.

Behaviors. Research in sociology and anthropology shows that socialization processes differ within and across communities. Even in the poorest urban neighborhoods many children receive the nurturance and protection that they need to mature and prosper. However, many schools, families, and community institutions lack the social and material resources to cope successfully with all of the youth development challenges that they face. Negative influences that tend to distract youths from wholesome development and from investing in their own futures can overwhelm the defenses that parents and their allies are able to muster. Mischief and crime are often the consequences.

Results from my research with the NLSY show that two indices related to crime are instrumental in predicting the number of weeks worked. The first measures whether the respondent was ever incar-

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cerated in the years prior to the analysis. The second is an "incarceration-likelihood index" that uses prior behaviors and other background factors to estimate the likelihood that the respondent has ever been incarcerated. This pair of variables is important in explaining black-white differences in employment. Young black males are more likely than young white males to experience incarceration. Moreover, actual prior incarceration has twice the negative effect on weeks worked for blacks as for whites.

Prior incarceration for a young white male predicts that, other things being equal, he will work an average of two months less per year than a young white male who has no history of incarceration. For young black males, the average difference between those with and without prior incarceration is four months per year. This measured effect of actual prior incarceration on weeks worked probably reflects both labor supply behavior (including reincarceration) and, on the demand side, employment discrimination that penalizes blacks who have criminal records more than it penalizes similar whites. Even for men with a history of incarceration who were *not* reincarcerated during the 1986–1988 study period, the effect of prior incarceration is more than twice as negative for blacks as for whites: roughly one month per year less work for whites and more than two months per year for blacks.

The strongest predictors of incarceration are locational and behavioral. Behaviors that help in predicting incarceration are: expulsion from school, unwed fatherhood, age of first intercourse (younger is worse), income from crime during adolescence, drug use, and dropping out before completing high school. Race, test scores, attitudes, family background, and local unemployment rates help in predicting these behaviors, but they do not help in predicting incarceration once the listed behaviors are controlled. Aside from indices associated with individuals, the incarceration rate in the geographic area where a young man lives is an important predictor of incarceration, explaining 30 percent of the black-white difference in incarceration rates. This signals the importance of local differences in law enforcement practices, youth cultures, and other features of local environments.

Among the indices of adolescent behavior that predict incarceration, only income from crime shows a statistically significant relationship to local unemployment (for the year during adolescence

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when the income from crime was earned). However, self-reported income from crime during adolescence does not differ much by race. In contrast, for example, the average age of first intercourse is more than one year earlier for blacks, bears no relationship to the state of the local economy, and is an important predictor of later incarceration.[61] The same is true for unwed fatherhood. These empirical results suggest that both economic and noneconomic forces predict differences in behavior that lead to mediocre labor market outcomes. Black-white differences in actual and predicted incarceration in this analysis account for an average difference between *all* blacks and whites in the sample (not simply those who have been incarcerated) of roughly one month per year in time employed.

Together with the one month which is estimated to be due to skill differences, this adds to a total difference in time employed of two months per year between black and white males aged twenty-three to thirty-one with thirteen or fewer years of schooling.

Quit Rates. Among the unanticipated findings from this work is that the black-white difference in job-resignation rates for noncollege-educated males in their twenties increases with occupational complexity—the quit rate for blacks rises with occupational complexity while that for whites falls.[62] In a multivariate statistical analysis that includes a number of controls, the difference between blacks and whites in the effect on employment of raising occupational complexity (as measured in the job held in 1985) predicts an average difference in employment of between four and five weeks per year for young blacks and whites during the period from 1986 to 1988. Again, this pattern is measured with years of schooling, test scores, and other background variables being held constant.

Table 2 shows the pattern in the raw data. It divides the jobs that men with thirteen or fewer years of schooling occupy into two categories—"low skill" and "high skill." This splits the sample rather evenly. The table covers three years, from 1986 to 1988. The NLSY interviewed respondents three times during this period, and the table tabulates the reason each respondent gave for leaving the last job. The answer comes from the first of the three interviews at which time the respondent reported that he was not currently employed. The bottom line of the table shows the percentages of blacks and whites who had jobs at all three interview dates, and

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who therefore never gave a reason for leaving a job. The percentage of blacks employed at all three dates is virtually the same for the "high skill" occupations (63.87 percent) as for the "low skill" occupations (62.66 percent). For whites, the percentage employed at all three dates rises from 75.08 percent in the "low skill" category to 85.60 percent in the "high skill" jobs.

TABLE 2. Reason for Leaving Most Recent Job (Males Aged 23–31 with Fewer than Thirteen Years of Schooling, 1986–1988)

	"Low Skill" Occupations			"High Skill" Occupations		
	Black	White	Black-White Difference	Black	White	Black-White Difference
Column:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Percent Layed Off	10.95	10.91	0.04	6.32	5.12	1.20
Percent Job Ended	3.38	3.20	0.18	6.54	1.46	5.08
Percent Quit	14.01	7.13	6.88	19.05	5.15	13.90
Percent Fired	6.81	2.37	4.44	3.04	1.69	1.35
Percent Other	2.19	1.31	0.88	1.18	0.98	0.20
Percent Employed at all Three Survey Dates	62.66	75.08	12.42	63.87	85.60	21.73

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, compiled by Ronald F. Ferguson.

The fact that increasing job complexity has different effects on employment longevity for blacks and whites reinforces the general proposition that skill differences are central in explaining racial differences in employment for young males, but, especially here, the mechanisms are not transparent.

As previously stated, after taking account of explanatory variables, the remaining unexplained difference in weeks worked for the least skilled blacks and whites is roughly one to three weeks. This difference applies to men in the least skilled jobs. For a job of average complexity, we need to add the four to five weeks per year (higher unemployment for blacks than whites) associated with the occupational complexity of the average job that blacks without college educations occupy. Whether one counts the four to five weeks associated with occupational complexity as "explained," because it is associated with a particular meaningful variable (occupational complexity), or "unexplained," because we do not under-

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stand why the black-white difference in this relationship exists, depends upon one's purpose.

Certainly, this effect is "unexplained" if one's purpose is to shape an intervention. A speculative explanation is that blacks and whites in the workplace are sometimes caught in a cycle of negative and self-fulfilling expectations: blacks expect that whites will expect less of them and will be less supportive to them than to whites; whites expect that blacks will have chips on their shoulders and will be less cooperative; each lives down to the other's expectations and the expectations are confirmed. If blacks respond by quitting, as *Table 2* suggests that they often may, then they accumulate less experience and, over time, the deficit in their experience may further harm their employment prospects and performance. Human relations across racial lines in the workplace, especially in blue-collar workplaces, present issues that deserve much more attention than they currently receive. Current ethnographic work by other researchers may help to explain the workplace dynamics associated with these interesting and important patterns.[63]

SUMMARY

World War II created new employment opportunities for African Americans. It brought growth in earnings that did not disappear when the war ended. While the causes shifted, the positive momentum of progress continued from the 1940s through the 1960s as younger blacks lead a mass migration away from the rural South. Some settled in Southern cities. Others migrated further to the cities of the North where, until the mid-1970s, economic opportunities were far superior.

Thanks to the Civil Rights movement, economic progress for blacks accelerated in the South after the mid-1960s. For the first time, more blacks returned to the South than left it during the 1970s. In addition to its many other achievements, the Civil Rights movement was a major force behind decisions by the Congress and the President of the United States to enact Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 11246. Both of these measures apparently helped to sustain income growth for blacks relative to whites well into the mid-1970s. These Civil Rights measures helped to insure, for example, that blacks would receive the

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growth in earnings that they deserved, commensurate with the gains that they were achieving in academic attainment. Blacks improved relative to whites in educational attainment and in various measures of school quality through the entire period after 1940. Researchers agree that this probably accounts for between one-quarter and one-half of the progress that blacks achieved in closing the gap in earnings, even without explicitly accounting for Civil Rights pressures.

After the mid-1970s, progress toward closing the gap in earnings stopped. In fact, for younger blacks, the trend reversed. Disparity grew.

A number of economic shifts, including racially disparate shifts in industry and occupational employment patterns, contributed to growth in racial disparity among young workers after 1975. Several may have common roots in the growing value of skill and in reduced federal pressure for affirmative action. Changing technology, the falling minimum wage, declining unionism, and increased immigration help to account for why the value of skill has grown both within and across racial groups.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress shows that basic skills for black high school students have been rising relative to those for whites since at least the early 1970s. The increase from -6 percent (in 1975) to -16 percent (in 1989) in the disparity in wage rates between young blacks and whites (measured without controlling for test scores) occurred not because blacks' skills have deteriorated. Instead, either the value of skill rose faster after 1975 than the black-white gap in skill closed—thus inflating the financial significance of remaining skill differences—or blacks in 1975 were earning more than whites who had similar qualifications, and the apparent erosion of earnings after 1975 was simply bringing them back in line. Both explanations may have some merit.

Based on the evidence, these explanations for what happened after 1975 seem more plausible than one that relies on an increase in discrimination. If an increase in discrimination were the major explanation for the increase in black-white earnings disparity, then one should expect an unexplained gap in earnings that is larger than 4.8 percent for 1988–1992. (Recall that 4.8 percent is the black-white gap in earnings that this essay estimates for 1988–1992 after

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accounting for differences in basic skills; before accounting for basic skills, the gap is 16.1 percent.)

Therefore, while this essay notes the continuing importance of discrimination and endorses the vigorous enforcement of Civil Rights laws, there are other explanations for the increase in disparity after 1975. Similarly, black-white differences in employment levels for men with thirteen or fewer years of schooling reflect various skill and behavioral differences, including a greater propensity to resign from occupations that require more skill. The latter pattern may be a response to racial bias in the social relations of work for more complex occupations. It warrants further investigation.

CONCLUSION

The most important disparities in opportunity may occur before young people even enter the labor market: in the provision of schooling and other resources that influence skill-building and the socialization of youths. These include not only current disparities in the quality of schooling and recreation and discouraging messages from society at large, but also racial inequities in past generations of institutions that prepared parents and grandparents for their roles as teachers and care givers. Certainly, efforts to fight unfair racial bias in hiring and promotion must continue. However, interventions to strengthen schools, families, and other institutions that prepare children for adulthood must be the highest priority in responding to the economic disparities that remain among young adults in the 1990s.

These are different times from the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The task now is to utilize more effectively the legal and institutional resources that the Civil Rights and Black Power movements helped to put in place. The dream that inspired these movements was that African Americans might lead more healthy, happy, and productive lives, free from the hardships and degradations of social and economic subordination. The dream has not fully come true. Indeed, America may never cast off completely the ideology of white supremacy. Similarly, social class interests that align with wealth and privilege will remain challenges to many visions of social fairness and equity. Nevertheless, the evidence that this essay reviews demonstrates that progress for Black Americans over the past fifty years

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has been remarkable. In the face of resistance, discipline, courage, and perseverance have paid dividends. The same will be true in the future. Just as our African American parents and grandparents taught this lesson to us, so we must teach it to our children and insist that they put it to practice.

On the last page of *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal writes:

> The rationalism and moralism which is the driving force behind social study, whether we admit it or not, is the faith that institutions can be improved and strengthened and that people are good enough to live a happier life. . . .To find the practical formulas for this never-ending reconstruction of society is the supreme task of social science. The world catastrophe places tremendous difficulties in our way and may shake our confidence to the depths. Yet we have today in social science a greater trust in the improvability of man and society than we have ever had since the Enlightenment.[64]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 222.

[2]On oppositional behaviors by stigmatized minorities, see, for example, John Ogbu, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1978). On discouraging and demeaning messages, see Ronald F. Ferguson and Mary S. Jackson, "Black Male Youth and Drugs: How Racial Prejudice, Parents, and Peers Affect Vulnerability," in Peter J. Venturelli, ed., *Drugs in America* (Boston, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1994).

[3]Developing this point is beyond the scope of the present paper. See Ronald F. Ferguson, "Racial Patterns in How School and Teacher Quality Affect Achievement and Earnings," *Challenge: A Journal of Research on Black Males* 2 (1) (May 1991); Ferguson and Jackson, "Black Male Youth and Drugs"; and Ronald F. Ferguson, "How Professionals in Community Based Programs Perceive and Respond to the Needs of Black Male Youth," in Ronald B. Mincy, ed., *Nurturing Young Black Males* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 1994).

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[4]This section goes through 1975 because that is roughly the time when improvement ceased to occur. However, much of the actual discussion goes through 1980 because 1980 was a census year. This section relies on the work of a number of authors. Most important among these are James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," *Journal of Economic Literature* XXVII (2) (June 1989): 519–64; John H. Donohue III and James Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks," *Journal of Economic Literature* XXIX (4) (December 1991): 1603–643; and David Card and Alan B. Krueger, "School Quality and Black-White Relative Earnings: A Direct Assessment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992): 151–200.

[5]The data for this graph come from Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal." See Ibid., 522, n. 5 for details on the way that they drew this sample from the census public use data files.

[6]Decreases in labor force participation have been larger for blacks than for whites and this may lead to an over estimate of progress in relative earnings. Donohue and Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change," citing studies reviewed in James Heckman, "The Impact of Government on the Economic Status of Black Americans," in Steven Shulman and William Darity, Jr., eds., *The Question of Discrimination* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 50–80, report estimates that "selective attrition of low wage blacks from the labor force likely accounts for 10–20 percent of black measured wage gains from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s." Also, Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," attempt to correct the estimated ratio of black-to-white male wages for selective attrition and conclude that it "explain[s] at most a minor part [roughly 5 percent] of the observed increase in black-white male wages between 1970 and 1980." William Darity and Samuel Myers were among the first to raise this concern that changes in labor force participation might distort simple black-white economic comparisons. See William A. Darity, Jr. "Illusions of Black Economic Progress," *Review of Black Political Economy* XX (2) (1980): 153–68, and William A. Darity, Jr. and Samuel L. Myers, Jr., "Changes in Black-White Income Inequality, 1968–78: A Decade of Progress?," *Review of Black Political Economy* XX (3) (1980): 355–79.

[7]Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," table 15.

[8]Based on Donohue and Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change," fig. 6. Note that these percentages are for gaps in hourly wages holding constant years of schooling, while those in *Figure 1* are for weekly wages and *do not* hold years of schooling constant.

[9]This spike appears in Ibid., table 6, which represents twenty to sixty-four year old males. A similar but smaller spike appears in the numbers from John Bound and Richard B. Freeman, "What Went Wrong? The Erosion of Relative Earnings and Employment Among Young Black Men in the 1980s," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992): 201–32, for men with zero to nine years of experience. These numbers from Bound and Freeman appear in this paper in *Figures 4* and *5*. *Figure 4* shows a huge spike for black college graduates between 1973 and 1976. Relative earnings for young black males jumped from an average of 4 percent below that for whites in 1973 to an average of 11 percent above that for whites in 1976.

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[10]Donohue and Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change."

[11]See Ibid., table 2 which is constructed from James P. Smith and Finis R. Welch, *Closing the Gap: Forty Years of Economic Progress for Blacks* (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Rand Corporation, R-3330-DOL, 1986), tables A.1 and A.2.

[12]Reynolds Farley and Walter Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987), table 5.1.

[13]Donohue and Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change," n. 13, using data from US Commission on Civil Rights, *The Economic Progress of Black Men in America* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1986), table 5.2.

[14]Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," table 20.

[15]Ibid., 215.

[16]Card and Krueger, "School Quality and Black-White Relative Earnings," fig. 1.

[17]Convergence along other dimensions, including the quality of teachers' preparation to teach, may still be some distance from being achieved. See Ronald F. Ferguson, "Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters," *Harvard Journal of Legislation* 28 (1) (Summer 1991), and Ferguson, "Racial Patterns in How School and Teacher Quality Affect Achievement and Earnings."

[18]In 1980, the percentage of twenty-five to thirty-four year old males who were high school graduates or better was 87.2 percent for white males and 75.3 percent for black males. By 1992, the percentages changed to 82.2 percent for black males and 86.3 percent for white males. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Black Population in the United States: March 1991*, Current Population Reports, Series P20–464, September 1992.

[19]Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal," tables A.1 and A.2.

[20]According to Heckman and Donohue, this is also true after accounting for a possible upward bias in estimates of black progress, due to the disproportionate decrease in labor force participation during this period by blacks who would have had lower earnings if they had worked.

[21]See, for example, Orley Ashenfelter and James Heckman, "Measuring the Effect of an Anti-Discrimination Program," in Orley Ashenfelter and James Blum, eds., *Estimating the Labor Market Effects of Social Programs* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Industrial Relations Section, 1976), chap. 3, 46–84; Jonathan S. Leonard, "Anti-Discrimination or Reverse Discrimination: The Impact of Changing Demographics, Title VII, and Affirmative Action on Productivity," *Journal of Human Resources* 19 (2) (Spring 1984): 145–72; and Jonathan S. Leonard, "Employment and Occupational Advance Under Affirmative Action," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 66 (3) (1984): 377–85.

[22]See Donohue and Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change," fig. 6 and Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?"

[23]This different pattern by age level is discussed in Michael A. Boozer, Alan B. Krueger, and Shari Wolkon, "Race and School Quality Since Brown v. Board of Education," *Brooking Papers: Microeconomics* (1992): table 13.

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[24]For an extensive review of why young black men are doing worse in the labor market see Philip Moss and Chris Tilly, "Why Black Men are Doing Worse in the Labor Market: A Review of Supply-Side and Demand-Side Explanations" (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1991).

[25]See, for example, Chinhui Juhn, Kevin M. Murphy, and Brooks Pierce, "Accounting for the Slowdown in Black-White Wage Convergence," in Marvin H. Kosters, ed., *Workers and Their Wages Changing Patterns in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute Press, 1991); William M. Rodgers III, "Black-White Wage Gaps, 1979–1991: A Distributional Analysis," unpublished paper, Harvard University, 1993; Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?"; Smith and Welch, "Black Economic Progress After Myrdal"; and Card and Krueger, "School Quality and Black-White Relative Earnings."

[26]"Potential experience" is the number of years during which a person could "potentially" have been working and accumulating experience. Most researchers measure it as the smaller of age minus years of schooling minus six, or age minus eighteen. Hence, experience for years when the respondent was under age eighteen or enrolled in school do not count.

[27]The data for *Figures 4* and *5* are from Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?," table 1. The data for *Figure 6* were provided directly by John Bound.

[28]White college graduates were also the only group that did not experience a decline in the real purchasing power of its earnings.

[29]Juhn, Murphy, and Pierce, "Accounting for the Slowdown in Black-White Wage Convergence," were among the first to construct an indirect test of this hypothesis. They compared the pattern from 1963–1987 in average earnings for blacks relative to those for a particular category of whites—whites at the years-of-schooling level that put them at the same percentile in the overall earnings distribution as the average black worker in 1963. They found that blacks' earnings tracked closely on those of the white comparison group. The results of their empirical test suggest that the forces responsible for blacks' average earnings falling behind whites' average earnings may be the same as the forces responsible for the increasing earnings disparity among whites. This force, they suggest, is the increasing demand for skill and the growing differential in pay that employers are willing to offer to more skilled workers.

[30]See Ina V. S. Mullis and Lynn B. Jenkins, "The Reading Report Card, 1971–88: Trends from the Nation's Report Card" (Princeton, N.J.: National Assessment of Educational Progress at Educational Testing Service, 1990), and John A. Dossey, Ina V. S. Mullis, Mary M. Lindquist, and Donald L. Chambers, "The Mathematics Report Card, Are We Measuring Up? Trends and Achievement Based on the 1986 National Assessment" (Princeton, N.J.: National Assessment of Educational Progress at Educational Testing Service, 1988).

[31]Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?," n. 6, report that the gap in earnings during the 1980s was roughly the same with or without controls for years of education. This was not because blacks did not continue to close the gap in schooling. Instead, it was because the rate of return to additional years of schooling (especially post-high school) was increasing. This offset the positive relative earnings effect of increased years of schooling, because it made the remaining gap in

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schooling more important as a source of earnings disparity between black and white males.

[32]For more on the growing inequality in the economy during the late 1970s and 1980s see Lawrence F. Katz and Kevin M. Murphy, "Changes in Relative Wages, 1963–1987: Supply and Demand Factors," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992): 35–78; Kevin M. Murphy and Finis Welch, "The Structure of Wages," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVII (1) (February 1992): 285–326; Frank Levy and Richard Murnane, "US Earnings Levels and Earnings Inequality: A Review of Recent Trends and Proposed Explanations," *Journal of Economic Literature* XXX (September 1992): 1333–381; Lawrence Mishel and Ruy A. Teixeira, "The Myth of the Coming Labor Shortage: Jobs, Skills, and Incomes of America's Workforce 2000" (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 1991); Robert Moffit and Peter Gottschalk, "Trends in the Covariance Structure of Earnings in the United States: 1969–1987," Institute for Research on Poverty, discussion paper no. 1001–93 (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin, 1993); McKinley Blackburn, David E. Bloom, and Richard B. Freeman, "The Declining Economic Position of Less Skilled American Men," in Gary Burtless, ed., *A Future of Lousy Jobs? The Changing Structure of US Wages* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990); John Bound and George Johnson, "Changes in the Structure of Wages in the 1980s: An Evaluation of Alternative Explanations," *The American Economic Review* 82 (3) (June 1992): 371–92; and Alan B. Krueger, "How Computers Have Changed the Wage Structure: Evidence from Microdata, 1984–1989," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* CVIII (1) (February 1993): 33–60.

[33]Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon express skepticism that an increase in the value of skill is responsible for the increase in disparity between young black and white males. The gap in skill between older blacks and whites is greater than that between younger blacks and whites. Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon argue that one should expect an increase in the value of skill to cause the disparity among older workers to increase by more, but in fact it changes hardly at all.

[34]See, for example, Richard J. Murnane, John B. Willett, and Frank Levy, "The Growing Importance of Cognitive Skills in Wage Determination," Harvard University Graduate School of Education and M. I. T., unpublished paper, March 1994. See also Ronald F. Ferguson, "New Evidence on the Growing Value of Skill and Consequences for Racial Disparity and Returns to Schooling," Working Paper # H–93–10, Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1993. In this working paper I show that for twenty-three year old males the measured impact of test scores on wages grew during the 1980s and that this helps to explain the increase in racial earnings disparity. However, I have refined these estimates and now find higher coefficients on test scores in the early 1980s than I had previously estimated. It is clearly true that test scores in the NLSY predict racial earnings differences that are difficult to predict without test scores. However, if the effect was already strong in the early 1980s, it may not explain the trend in earnings disparity during the 1980s. Resolution on this question concerning the trend is difficult given the character of available data.

[35]Employers are reporting these changes in a project that I am conducting with John Ballantine.

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[36]Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?"

[37]George J. Borjas, Richard B. Freeman, and Lawrence F. Katz, "On the Labor Market Effects of Trade and Immigration," Harvard University, Department of Economics, unpublished paper, 1989. Also see George J. Borjas, Richard B. Freeman, and Kevin Lang, "Undocumented Mexican-Born Workers in the United States: How Many and How Permanent," in Richard Freeman and J. Abowd, eds., *Immigration, Trade and the Labor Market* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press and NBER, 1991).

[38]Jonathan S. Leonard, "The Impact of Affirmative Action Regulation and Equal Employment Law on Black Employment," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 4 (4) (Fall 1990): 47–64.

[39]Reported in Bound and Freeman, "What Went Wrong?," 215, n. 13. Also see Jeremiah Cotton, "The Gap at the Top: Relative Occupational Earnings Disadvantage of the Black Male Middle Class," *Review of Black Political Economy* 18 (3) (Winter 1990): 21–38, for a related discussion.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Michael Fix and Raymond J. Struyk, eds., *Clear and Convincing Evidence* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1993).

[42]See extensive interview findings in Joleen Kirschenman and Katherine Neckerman, "We'd Love to Hire Them, But. . . : The Meaning of Race for Employers," in Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *The Urban Underclass* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1991).

[43]Ronald F. Ferguson and Randall Filer, "Do Better Jobs Make Better Workers? Absenteeism from Work Among Inner-City Minority Youth," in R. Freeman and H. Holzer, eds., *The Black Youth Employment Crisis* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press and NBER, 1986), report higher absenteeism rates for blacks than for whites in the Current Population Survey. Blacks have higher quit rates than whites in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.

[44]See June O'Neill, "The Role of Human Capital in Earnings Differences Between Black and White Men," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 4 (4) (Fall 1990): 25–45; Derek A. Neal and William R. Johnson, "The Role of Pre-Market Factors in Black-White Wage Differences," unpublished paper; Nan L. Maxwell, "The Effect on Black-White Wage Differences of Differences in the Quantity and Quality of Education," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 47 (2) (January 1994): 249–64; Ferguson, "New Evidence on the Growing Value of Skill and Consequences for Racial Disparity and Returns to Schooling"; and Ferguson, "Racial Patterns in How School and Teacher Quality Affect Achievement and Earnings." The findings reported in Ferguson, "New Evidence on the Growing Value of Skill and Consequences for Racial Disparity and Returns to Schooling" have since been modified to reflect larger estimated returns to test scores even in the early 1980s than the paper originally found. Hence, the trends in the "price of skill" that the paper reports are too steep, but the finding that test scores account for much of the racial difference in earnings by the late 1980s still stands.

[45]The AFQT score here is standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one for each individual age group. The score used is a measure of each respondent's proficiency at the test date relative to his same-aged peers. Since the

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youngest person at the time of the test was fourteen years old, and little reason exists to expect that the *rank order* of basic skills changes much among a population after age fourteen, the age-standardized AFQT score that we use is probably a good measure of young adults' proficiencies relative to their peers. For a discussion of why academic test scores are related to earnings and of the stability of the relationship between test scores and earnings even if scores are measured at young ages, see Christopher Jencks, *Who Gets Ahead? The Determinants of Economic Success in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), chap. 5. If these test score data collected in 1980 are not accurate measures for the late 1980s and early 1990s, then the measurement error will cause the findings to underestimate the effect of the measured skills in explaining wages.

[46]In order to do the most representative analysis, we exclude the supplemental samples of poor whites, identified by sample identification numbers two and nine in the NLSY. Including these would cause blacks to appear more well-off relative to whites than they actually are. We also exclude members of the special military sample identified by sample identification numbers of fifteen and over. To avoid distortions due to student or military status, we exclude men who were enrolled in school as of May 1 of any survey year from 1988–1992 or who had military income during this period. Men with reported hourly earnings of less than $1 or more than $75 were dropped (these constituted less than 1 percent of the sample).

[47]Wages are in 1988 dollars. The natural logarithm of the average real wage for the five years is the dependent variable and each man in the analysis contributes one observation to each estimated regression equation.

[48]Years-of-schooling controls are dummy (0,1) variables for individual years of schooling. This allows the effect of years of schooling to be nonlinear. Potential experience is essentially a measure of age. We measure it in the standard way: it equals age minus years of schooling minus six, if years of schooling exceeds twelve; and it equals age minus eighteen if years of schooling is less than twelve. The location controls are individual 0,1 variables for each of the four major census regions, and 0,1 variables to measure rural versus central city versus suburban location.

[49]In other analyses we have tested the importance of other family background variables. Generally, once test scores are in the analysis, contributions of family background variables to equations for employment outcomes are small and statistically insignificant. Including other variables does not change the bottom-line conclusions of the simpler analysis reported here. Where family background measures are most important, in a more extensive analysis, is in predicting the test scores. Mothers' and fathers' years of schooling, characteristics of the fathers' occupation, and the number of educational resources in the home are all important predictors of the AFQT test score that we use.

[50]This discussion of results is intended to be accessible to a general audience. Some of the technical details are in the footnotes, but the full pattern of results is not shown. Readers may write to the author for a copy of the full regression results.

[51]We estimated four equations to construct Panels A and B of *Figure 7*: one that used the data for whites only and excluded the AFQT from the explanatory variables; a second that used the data for whites only but included the AFQT; a third that used the data for blacks only without the AFQT; and, a fourth that used the data

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for blacks only and included the AFQT among the explanatory variables. Again, all estimates include controls for years of schooling, census region, central city versus suburban versus rural residence, and years of potential experience.

[52]Differences between panels A and B are due to differences in blacks' and whites' average characteristics, not to differences in their treatment. Differences in *treatment* are reflected in the length of each bar, since each bar represents the difference between being treated as black or white.

[53]Statistical tests do not reject the null hypothesis that these two approaches are equivalent.

[54]The t-statistic on the 16.1 percent is 8.21; the t-statistic on the 4.8 percent is 2.08. The adjusted R-square statistic is 0.2845 for the regression that excludes the AFQT and 0.3302 for the regression that includes it.

[55]Pooling the regions together in regressions and using 0,1 variables to capture the black-white differential for each region produces essentially the same pattern in estimates of racial differences. We report results from separate regressions primarily to assure readers that the estimated patterns really do apply separately to each region. Results for the West are not shown because the sample size for blacks in the West is too small to make the estimates reliable. We find that the AFQT score in the West matters as much for predicting wages as for the other regions, but the estimated black-white difference has a very large standard error because of the small number of blacks in the NLSY's Western sample. Men from the West are, however, included in estimates that pool all regions, such as those in *Figure 7* and in Panels D and E of *Figure 8*.

[56]We cannot know for sure whether this difference represents unequal treatment. It may be that blacks are different in a way that our estimates do not measure, that they live in lower-wage cities, or that their referral networks do not contain information about the same quality of jobs as for whites. Analogous statements apply for estimates that suggest nearly equal treatment.

[57]The -3.6 has a t-statistic of 0.87, such that this estimate of -3.6 is not statistically distinguishable from zero.

[58]The research paper that presents these findings more formally is currently in progress. What follows is simply a summary of findings.

[59]All of the regression results for total weeks worked are from Tobit regressions that take account of truncation at both zero and fifty-two weeks per year.

[60]Racial bias does not appear to be important in the interviewer's rating: race is not a predictor of the interviewer's rating once test scores, years of schooling, and social background factors are controlled. The occupational complexity measure comes from the occupation that the respondent had in 1985, not the occupation that he has during any of the three years from 1986 to 1988 for which the analysis aims to explain the number of weeks worked.

[61]It seems reasonable to speculate that youths who engage in early sexual activity, especially boys, may be distracted away from other more developmentally appropriate activities by the increased preoccupation with finding more opportunities to repeat the experience.

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[62]The occupational complexity ratings come from a factor analysis of job characteristics, conducted as part of a study for the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. The rating is a composite measure of a number of different distinguishable characteristics of jobs, constructed in the early 1980s using 1970 standard occupational classification codes.

[63]The Russell Sage Foundation is currently supporting a cluster of research projects among which are both quantitative and qualitative studies that may shed light on these issues.

[64]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 1024.

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Walter R. Allen and Joseph O. Jewell

African American Education Since *An American Dilemma*

PUBLISHED IN 1944, AMID THE MASSIVE destruction and racial genocide of World War II, Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* stood not only as a challenge to America's democratic principles, but as a firm testament to their promise. Myrdal thought of the American race problem as a moral dilemma located at the very heart of this nation's democratic ethos. For him the key to its solution resided in education. Education represented a vehicle for combating racist beliefs as well as a way to improve the living conditions of most blacks. Increased educational opportunities for blacks, Myrdal argued, was an important step toward ending segregation, improving black economic development, and ultimately solving the race problem in America. Fifty years have passed, leaving Myrdal's study to persist as a challenge to and an interrogation of American democracy. This essay revisits Myrdal's classic work and examines trends, issues, progress, problems, and prospects of black education since its publication.

From its very inception, the black quest for educational opportunity in America has been beset with obstacles: outright opposition through racism, well-meaning white paternalism, as well as internal ideological debates over the goals and purposes of education. Fifty years ago, Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* provided the impetus for change in black education and since that time numerous events have changed the face of black education. Despite these events, fundamental ideological issues have yet to be resolved. In

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order to understand the impact of *An American Dilemma* on black education, it is first necessary to place this discussion in its proper historical context.

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL: BLACK EDUCATION AS AN AMERICAN DILEMMA

In 1944 black schools were faced with paternalistic cooperation on one hand and savage inequality on the other. In both the North and the South, the education of blacks was largely controlled by outsiders (i.e., whites), but executed by blacks themselves. From the very beginning, the accountability of black schools to the community or population they served was a hotly contested issue.

Myrdal's chapter on education, entitled "The Negro School," is largely focused on the existing conditions of black education in the South. Myrdal showed that black education in the South was controlled by Southern whites who sought to preserve the racial caste system and by Northern whites who continued to bear much of the financial responsibility.

> [T]he South now has complete control of Negro education on the elementary and secondary levels. Negroes hold some of the control over their own schools, partly because they help to pay for them by voluntary contributions, but mainly because they are the only teachers now in Southern Negro schools. . . .But ultimate control is held by the White super-intendents and school boards, subject only to the few restrictions entailed in accepting federal grants in aid and to the advice of the General Education Board.[1]

At the time of Myrdal's writing, 75 percent of America's black population lived in the South. This region had traditionally been set apart from the rest of the country by its poor economy, low rate of school attendance, and correspondingly high rate of illiteracy. In the South, racially separate schools were mandated by law under the doctrine of "separate but equal," gleaned from the Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* (1896).[2] The schools for blacks that did exist were consistently shortchanged in terms of educational materials, building construction and maintenance, funding, and other resources. Schools in urban areas were often overcrowded, with one school serving a city's entire black population. In rural

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districts, if there were schools at all they were often dilapidated, unhealthy one-room versions with even less space than their urban counterparts. However, James Anderson notes that the development of public secondary education in the South deliberately excluded African Americans.[3] No new high school facilities were made available to blacks despite the fact that in many areas they comprised a large proportion of the state population (in some counties, blacks were in the majority).

Community control over the educational system was practically nonexistent at the time of Myrdal's study. Schools for blacks were, for the most part, unresponsive to the communities they served. These schools were ostensibly used as instruments of social control by the Southern white power structure.[4] The curriculum was closely monitored by whites, if not controlled by them outright. Although segregated schools were entirely staffed by black teachers and administrators, they had little or no say in the way these schools were run. So long as their views and educational practices were in line with the beliefs and dictates of the local white power structure, black schools were left to themselves. The hiring and firing of teachers and staff, however, was a matter entirely under the control and/or supervision of white officials.

This control extended to the postsecondary level as well.[5] White Southerners carefully monitored the curriculum of state-funded colleges. In most state colleges for blacks, precollegiate courses were offered along with limited vocational and industrial education. Northern white philanthropy (e.g., Phelps-Stokes Fund, Rosenwald Fund, John H. Rockefeller) compensated for the lack of state funding by helping to establish and maintain schools, provide teachers, and fund building construction. Black instructors and administrators were, therefore, often beholden to those who supported their institutions. They were dependent upon the charity of whites not only for the education of their people but also for their livelihood.

The black struggle for educational parity with whites has a long history and continues to dominate the dialogue about American education. Since *An American Dilemma* was written, the ideological issues at stake in the quest for black educational parity differ very little from those that have always faced black institutions.[6] Debates continue over the best strategy to pursue in the struggle for equality: admission into white institutions versus the development

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and maintenance of separate black institutions; integration versus group pluralism; assimilation versus separatism; self-determination versus external control. In *An American Dilemma,* Myrdal assessed the role of race prejudice in hampering the educational goals of blacks and explained the necessity of removing formal racial barriers to education. However, neither he nor the Civil Rights leadership that followed adequately addressed the question of what should be the role of blacks in controlling their own educational destiny.

BLACK EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS, 1944–1994: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT

In the three generations since their emancipation from slavery, African Americans made significant progress in all arenas of life. This progress was especially pronounced in education. W. E. B. Du Bois described the organized and successful efforts in pursuit of education and group advancement as "one of the marvelous occurrences of the modern world; almost without parallel in the history of civilization."[7]

In his chapter on "The Negro School," Myrdal acknowledged the great thirst for education that characterized African Americans after their formal bondage ended: "American Negroes have taken over the American faith in education"[8]; for them school represented a Holy Grail by which their freedom would be confirmed. Myrdal, quoting Booker T. Washington, makes this point:

> Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of my race showed for education. It was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young and none were too old, to make the attempt to learn. As fast as any kind of teachers could be secured, not only were day-schools filled, but night schools as well.[9]

In later studies, James Anderson,[10] V. P. Franklin,[11] and Thomas Webber[12] confirmed that the emphasis on education among African Americans in the post-Civil War South was strategic. Their determined efforts to institutionalize black education specifically, and to establish universal education generally, represented the demonstrated desire of African Americans to educate themselves and their chil-

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dren as a means of "defending and extending" their emancipation.[13]

Interestingly, Myrdal provides only scanty empirical information about the educational status of African Americans. However, his estimate of illiteracy rates among blacks is revealing since this statistic was the original measure of education used in the US Census.[14] He estimated that by 1860, only 5 percent of slaves could read and write. Obviously the literacy rate would have been much higher among free Negroes.

Table 1 shows that in 1890, one generation after emancipation, 61 percent of the African American population was illiterate. By comparison, only 8 percent of whites were illiterate. The success of the efforts among blacks to educate themselves and their progeny was evident by the end of World War II. A difference in 1890 of over 50 percentage points between black and white illiteracy rates had been reduced to fewer than 10 percentage points by 1947. Twenty-five years ago, the percentage of African Americans who were illiterate essentially matched the percentage for whites (4 percent versus 1 percent). Today, race differences in illiteracy rates are negligible. African Americans have "caught up" to whites.

TABLE 1. Illiteracy Rates by Race

Year	Black	White
1890	61%	8%
1910	33%	5%
1930	18%	3%
1947	11%	2%
1959	7%	2%
1969	4%	1%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790–1978* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1979), table 68.

In order to accurately assess the educational progress of African Americans since the Myrdal study, it will be helpful to employ a wider array of educational attainment measures. *Table 2* provides statistics on school enrollment by race for individuals aged five to twenty years. From 1890 to 1940 the percentage of African Americans enrolled in school virtually doubled, from 33 percent to 65 percent. Over the same period, the difference between blacks and whites in school enrollment dropped from 25 percentage points to

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7 percentage points. These changes provide evidence of substantial gains in educational access for African Americans. For the past thirty years, race differences in school enrollment have been virtually nonexistent. This second measure of educational attainment shows substantial black progress over the periods prior to, and following, Myrdal's 1944 study.

TABLE 2. School Enrollment by Race, 5 to 20 year olds

Year	Black	White
1890	33%	58%
1910	45%	61%
1940	65%	72%
1950	79%	82%
1960	82%	86%
1970	82%	85%
1980	86%	86%
1990	88%	89%

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790–1978* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1979), table 63; US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1989* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1989), table 206; and US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1992* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1993), table 227.

An examination of race differences in the level of schooling completed adds to the emerging view of dramatic black gains in educational attainment over the past half century (see *Table 3*). In 1940, only 7 percent of blacks had completed four or more years of high school. For whites the figure was 26 percent. By further contrast, in 1940, 1 percent of African Americans and 5 percent of European Americans had completed four or more years of college. In 1992, 82 percent of blacks were high school graduates, compared to 87 percent of whites. However, the racial difference in the percentage of college graduates had actually increased since the publication of *An American Dilemma*: from 4 percentage points in 1940 to 12 percentage points in 1992. It should also be noted that by 1992 there had ceased to be any substantial difference in median years of schooling completed by blacks and whites. As was true for other measures of educational attainment, the absolute gains in level of schooling completed since Myrdal's original study have been much greater for blacks than for whites.

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TABLE 3. Level of Schooling Completed by Race

Year	Percent of Total Population		Median Years of School Completed
	4 Years or More of High School	4 Years or More of College	
BLACK			
1940	7%	1%	5.7
1960	20	3	8.2
1970	31	4	9.8
1975	43	6	10.9
1980	54	9	12.0
1992	81.8	12	12.4*
WHITE			
1940	26%	5%	8.8
1960	43	8	10.9
1970	55	11	12.1
1975	65	14	12.4
1980	71.3	19.3	12.5
1992	87.1	24.2	12.7*

*Figure taken for the year 1990.

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, *The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View, 1790–1978* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1979), table 70; US Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Characteristics* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1983), tables 83 and 123; US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1992* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1993), table 230; and Claudette Bennett, *The Black Population in the United States: March 1992* (Washington, D.C.: US Bureau of the Census, 1993), table 1.

High school completion rates and college enrollment rates provide yet another perspective on the relative educational attainments of blacks and whites. *Table 4* summarizes these statistics for the twenty-year period from 1972 to 1992. Race differences on these measures were more resistant to change over the period in question. In 1972, thirty years after Myrdal, the high school completion rate for whites was 82 percent. This represented an advantage for whites over blacks of 15 percentage points. By 1992, the racial difference in high school completion rates had only reduced by half, to 8 percentage points (whites 83 percent, blacks 75 percent). It is important to note that 1992 high school completion rates were lowest for black males (72 percent) and highest for white females (85 percent).

College enrollment rates reveal different patterns by race than were shown for high school completion rates (see *Table 4*). In 1972,

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27 percent of African Americans who graduated high school enrolled in college. This was only 5 percentage points below the college enrollment rate for white high school graduates in the same year (32 percent). In 1992, 42 percent of whites who graduated high school enrolled in college, as compared to 34 percent of African Americans. The race difference had increased by 8 percentage points. Moreover, between 1972 and 1992 black women replaced black men as the group least likely to attend college after graduating high school.

TABLE 4. High School Completion and College Enrollment Rates by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 1972–1992, 18 to 24 year olds

Year	High School Completion Rate			High School Graduates Enrolled in College		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
WHITE						
1972	81.7%	81.1%	82.2%	32.3%	38.6%	26.6%
1975	83.2	82.7	83.6	32.4	36.4	28.6
1980	82.6	80.6	84.4	31.8	33.8	29.9
1985	83.6	81.7	85.4	34.4	35.8	33.0
1990	82.5	81.1	83.8	39.4	40.3	38.6
1992	83.3	81.2	85.3	42.2	41.6	42.8
BLACK						
1972	66.7%	63.4%	69.6%	27.1%	33.0%	22.5%
1975	64.8	61.8	67.1	32.0	32.8	31.5
1980	69.7	66.0	72.6	27.6	26.3	28.6
1985	75.6	72.3	78.4	26.1	27.7	24.9
1990	77.0	75.9	77.8	33.0	34.4	31.8
1992	74.6	72.3	76.8	33.8	29.7	37.5

Source: Deborah Carter and Reginald Wilson, *Minorities in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1993).

Any discussion of African American higher educational attainment is incomplete if the role of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) is not considered. Many of these institutions were founded in the shadow of slavery as blacks struggled to define a new place for themselves in society. Established and funded through the joint efforts of Northern philanthropists and African Americans themselves, these schools assumed central roles in national efforts to educate blacks. The content of the curricula of these schools varied from agricultural and vocational science to classical instruction.

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In 1944 virtually all college-educated African Americans (over 95 percent) had attended and graduated from an HBCU. In 1992 only 27 percent of black BA degree recipients graduated from HBCUs.[15] Rapid expansion in higher education over this period translated into 1992 total national undergraduate enrollments of 12.5 million whites and 1.3 million blacks, with 225,000 blacks attending HBCUs.[16]

Until the 1970s, twenty years after *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas,* black colleges and universities were essentially the only institutions that provided higher education to black people in this country. In 1968, 80 percent of all African Americans who were awarded undergraduate degrees graduated from historically black institutions.[17] Although the public and private schools that are historically labeled black presently represent a mere 3 percent of the total 3,200 institutions of higher learning in this country, they continue to contribute disproportionately to the production of black college degree holders. In 1980–1981, HBCUs conferred 19,556 Bachelor's degrees, 3,185 Master's degrees, and 69 Doctoral degrees, representing respectively 32 percent, 19 percent, and 6 percent of all degrees awarded to African Americans that year.[18] Ten years later the figures were equally impressive and disproportionate. In 1990–1991, 27 percent of Bachelor's degrees (17,069), 16 percent of Master's degrees (2,482), and 12 percent of Doctoral degrees (127) earned by African Americans that year were conferred by black schools.[19]

In America, our cultural ethos would lead us to believe that economics are tied to educational attainment. To the extent that a person achieves educationally, it is assumed that she is adding to her human, social, and cultural capital in such a way as to ultimately increase her economic value. In short, the theory presumes America to be a meritocratic society where educational gains will translate into direct economic gains, irrespective of a person's race. But, as Myrdal noted, "even among the youths from other poor and disadvantaged groups in the North the ideals implanted by the schools do not fit life as they actually experience it. The conflicts are, of course, accentuated in the case of Negroes."[20]

When Myrdal conducted his study he concluded that blacks did not receive economic returns on their educational attainment commensurate with those paid to whites of equal educational status. *Figure 1* provides a capsule reminder of the current pattern of

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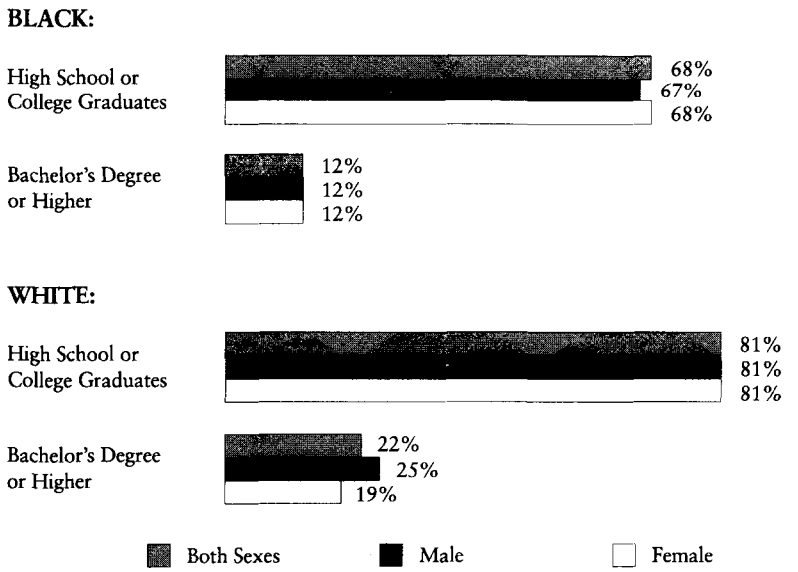
educational attainment for Americans of European and African descent. In March 1992, 68 percent of blacks twenty-five years old or older were high school or college graduates, compared to 81 percent of similarly defined whites. For the same cohort, 22 percent of whites and 12 percent of blacks earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. *Figure* 2 shows the economic returns for each race/gender/education category in 1991. The racial disadvantage in economic returns to level of education, pointed out by Myrdal in 1944, continues to be a reality. When the median earnings of year-round, full-time workers are broken down by educational attainment, sex, and race, we see that blacks are disadvantaged relative to whites and that women are disadvantaged relative to men. Overall, black high school graduates earned $18,620 annually as compared to $22,370 earned by whites, a shortfall of nearly $4,000. And black women earned the least.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of Individuals, 25 years old and older, by Educational Attainment, Sex, and Race, March 1992



Source: US Bureau of the Census.

A similar pattern presents itself when we compare by race and gender the earnings of full-time, year-round workers who earned a

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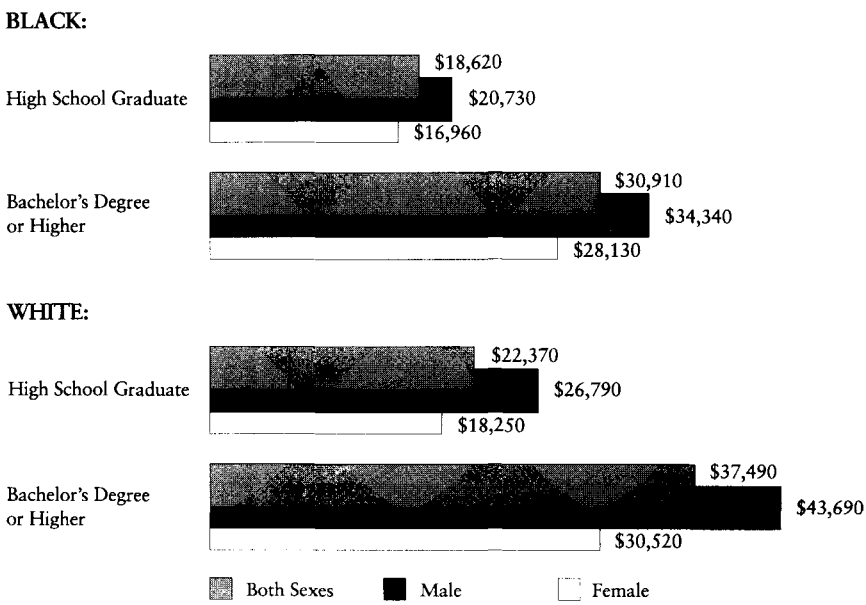
Bachelor's degree or higher. Whites received a premium of nearly $7,000 over blacks ($37,490 versus $30,910). White males were by far the highest earning group in this category with annual median earnings of $43,690, as compared to $34,340 for college educated black males, $30,520 for white females, and $28,130 for black females. Again, black women were the most poorly compensated.

FIGURE 2. Median Earnings of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, 25 years old and older, by Educational Attainment, Sex, and Race, 1991



Source: US Bureau of the Census.

MYRDAL'S TRENDS AND POSSIBILITIES IN BLACK EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS

Myrdal was largely accurate in his predictions for black education. He foresaw the formal dissolution of the dual school system in the South, which proved to be an increasingly heavy financial burden for the already strained Southern economy.

In the chapter entitled "The Negro Community as a Pathological Form of the American Community," Myrdal argues that the African American community and its culture are essentially "distorted

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developments" or "pathological conditions" of the general American community and culture. Assimilation, therefore, is held to be the ultimate goal for blacks:

> We assume that it is to the advantage of American Negroes as individuals and as a group to become assimilated into American culture, to acquire the traits held in esteem by the dominant White Americans.[21]

Like most social scientists of his era, Myrdal not only believed assimilation to be the "final solution" to the race problem, he also viewed education as a means of achieving that goal. Education would change African American culture (i.e., remove its pathological elements) and eventually bring blacks into the larger American community:

> The trend toward a rising educational level of the Negro population is of tremendous importance for the power relations discussed in this part of our inquiry. Education means an assimilation of White American culture. It decreases the dissimilarity of the Negroes from other Americans.[22]

To interpret black culture and the black community as pathological is to see both as impediments to the solution of the American dilemma. It follows that blacks and whites must go to school together in order for blacks to become part of the larger American culture. In what was perhaps a token gesture to Du Bois, Myrdal quotes his criticisms of this strategy:

> [T]heoretically, the Negro needs neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education. What he must remember is that there is no magic, either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers, with hostile opinion, and no teaching concerning black folk, is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and wretched housing, is equally bad.[23]

Myrdal's own analysis advances the premise that black schools are innately undesirable. Moreover, Myrdal defines attempts to incorporate cultural content in black education as problematic and futile. He refers to the "Negro History Movement" of Dr. Carter G. Woodson as an "essentially propagandistic" tool against white superiority, a "counterpoison" to white racism with no real value.[24]

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By arguing that the black community was a pathological form of the larger American community, and by viewing assimilation as the "best possible alternative for blacks," Myrdal put the stamp of scientific legitimacy on integration as the only means to achieve racial parity in education.

In the wake of *An American Dilemma*'s publication, a number of events took place within the integrationist paradigm that changed the face of black education. The most notable of these events were the school segregation cases, culminating with *Brown* v. *Board of Education.* Since the late 1930s, the Civil Rights leadership had initiated court cases designed to chip away at the "separate but equal" doctrine that was the basis of the South's dual school system. This strategy was developed by Charles Hamilton Houston and executed by Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense Fund (NAACP-LDF).[25] The NAACP sought to force state governments throughout the South to use state funds to improve black schools. If these states were unable to provide equal or comparable facilities, then integration into existing white institutions would be an unavoidable consequence. This strategy was initiated in 1938 with *Missouri ex. rel. Gaines* v. *Canada,* continued with *Briggs* v. *Elliott* (1948), *Sipuel* v. *Oklahoma State Regents* (1948), *McLaurin* v. *Oklahoma State Regents* (1950), and *Sweatt* v. *Painter* (1950), and culminated in 1954 with *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (in which Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren cited *An American Dilemma* as a general source for the basis of his decision). The *Brown* decision directly attacked segregation in American education by declaring the doctrine of "separate but equal" unconstitutional. As a result, ensuing decades saw the formal dissolution of dual school systems. Integration gave blacks full access to American education. It also compromised the level of control exerted over schools by outside sources (i.e., Northern philanthropic organizations) and the organic link that existed between black schools and black communities under segregation.

An American Dilemma does not address the possibility that blacks would have control over their own educational destiny, presumably because Myrdal did not view this as a viable alternative or a priority. Consequently, Myrdal failed to anticipate the black political and cultural movement of the 1960s and 1970s which not

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only advocated community control of educational institutions, but also questioned the validity of the broader American culture and its relevance for black students. One of the most striking partings with the integrationist stances of the Civil Rights leadership was New York City's Ocean Hill-Brownsville Teacher's Strike of 1968–1969.

Protests by parents in the community of Ocean Hill in Brooklyn over school conditions prompted the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) to suggest to the Ford Foundation that the Ocean Hill group be included in a pilot program on decentralization with two other predominately minority schools. As part of an experiment in school decentralization, autonomous local school boards were to be created. Composed of six elected parent representatives and five representatives appointed by the mayor from a list submitted by community groups, each had the power to make budget, curriculum, and personnel decisions. While the city of New York was committed to the policy of decentralization of its operations in an attempt to "deepen and broaden the relationship of the communities to the schools," the UFT opposed the plan on the grounds that it was a "Balkanization" of the schools. Despite the opposition of the UFT, this experiment was implemented in three districts: Two Bridges (Lower East Side), I. S. 201 (Harlem), and Ocean Hill-Brownsville (Brooklyn).

The subsequent transfer of nineteen faculty members from an Ocean Hill school on the grounds that they were attempting to undermine the experiment prompted a year long teacher's strike, pitting parents and community leaders against teachers. The UFT protested the transfers, claiming that they were in violation of due process, and went on strike against the district, taking with them some 350 teachers. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board hired replacement teachers. The UFT expanded its strike to all city schools, demanding the reinstatement of the transferred teachers and the 350 teachers out on strike. Eventually, the School Board agreed to reinstate all of the teachers and to have a hearing concerning those who were transferred. Following that agreement, however, residents of the communities barred the teachers from entering the school, prompting the UFT to strike again. The Ocean Hill Board was suspended for its actions and the UFT, as a condition of ending its strike, demanded that the decentralization project be deemed a failure. The community boards were suspended and the districts

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were placed under state trusteeship pending the decision of the State Education Commissioner. In the following year, the experimental districts were dismantled and merged into larger "community districts" under a new plan proposed by the central board and approved by the UFT.

The rhetoric of integration versus separatism quickly found its way into this conflict. Conservatives and parents arguing for decentralization and local community empowerment found themselves in opposition to liberal social democrats comfortable with the rhetoric of integration but unnerved by that of the new "Black Power" militancy. The fight for community control at Ocean Hill-Brownsville was essentially an outgrowth of the move by blacks to embrace traditional political cohesion. While this move was not consistent with the Civil Rights leadership's views on education, the NAACP's official mouthpiece, *The Crisis,* offered the following statement in response to the events:

> [We demand that] the Board of Education of the City of New York reinstate the local board and its members and enjoin the City Board from interfering with the functioning of the local board in any manner which violates the Fourteenth Amendment.[26]

Another NAACP representative made the point that

> [The UFT fight] is an extension of its successful fight in the state legislature. . .opposing decentralization. . .decentralization delegates authority to local governing boards. . .even though provisions for protection of teacher rights are included. The union is using the issue of teacher security in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville District as a smokescreen for its campaign of distortion. Its real objective is power to control the city's schools and to avoid teacher accountability for the failure to teach Negro and Puerto Rican children.[27]

In many respects, this conflict reflected the tensions that have long existed between white paternalism and black self-determination with regards to education. From its earliest days, black access to education has been influenced—if not controlled—by the paternalistic "assistance" of whites, conservative and liberal alike. Operating from a position of power, whites determined not only the form but the content of black education.[28] The paternalistic control that white liberals exercised over the education of minorities in New York was directly challenged by blacks and Puerto Ricans in

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Ocean Hill-Brownsville who sought control over the education of their own children. In this sense, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville conflict was no different from those that occurred between black communities and white missionaries in the South during the 1860s.[29] At both junctures the issues boiled down to who would set the agenda for African American education, whites or blacks.

Many of the issues that the "community control of schools movement" sought to address remain unresolved. Schools located in predominantly minority urban areas face many of the same conditions today that they did fifty years ago (overcrowding, inadequate funding, poorly trained teachers, and run-down facilities, among others), coupled with the more recent phenomena of economic dislocation, drugs, and violence. As a result, black students have yet to reach educational parity with whites. The integration movement, largely pushed forward by the Civil Rights leadership, bears some of the responsibility for this situation. High-achieving students as well as their influential parents abandoned schools in black communities for schools in white communities (where they would have little or no influence over the education of their children).[30] Black community schools could have been maintained with full rather than partial funding from the state and controlled by black administrators, black teachers, and black parents. This did not happen. Community control of schools in African American communities was not addressed in *An American Dilemma,* was never an issue in *Brown,* and has not been a priority of the liberal social science/Civil Rights leadership coalition. The issue, therefore, went unresolved but not forgotten in the communities most directly affected. Black communities have periodically pressed for control over their children's education. From the Reconstruction period to the Black Power era to the present, blacks have sought to assert their own agenda in the education of their young. Today we see this sentiment expressed in efforts to establish Afrocentric curriculums and schools whose sole purpose is to educate black males, and in efforts to insure the survival of HBCUs.

RACIAL ANTIPATHY, RACIAL DOMINANCE, AND EDUCATION

Myrdal's study failed to anticipate the intractability of American racial prejudice and discrimination. In his final analysis of the

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"American Dilemma" (chapter 45), Myrdal predicts a gradual erosion of the American caste system. While this held true in regard to formal practices and laws, the white backlash in the late 1960s and early 1970s, coupled with the persistence of American racial beliefs, betrays the optimism of Myrdal's assimilationist view. White resistance to efforts to fundamentally alter the racial caste structure may be rooted in attitudes more commonly attributed to group self-interest than to racial prejudice—but the end result is the same.

In the 1970s, busing children to schools was seen as a way to correct racial segregation in schools. In fact these attempts to integrate American schools failed miserably. Today schools are as segregated racially as they were four decades ago, and in some cases segregation has actually worsened.[31] Racial hostility, economic restructuring, reprioritization by government, the American emphasis on personal freedom, shifting political moods, white backlash, urban violence, and declining funding for schools are offered as explanations for the failure of integration. A more fundamental explanation, however, may be the socialized aversion of whites to sharing space and intimacy with blacks— especially as equals. Whites have been socialized from earliest memory to define blacks as inferior, deviant, and dangerous. These negative stereotypes are continually reinforced. From this negative attitudes and accompanying negative behaviors emerge that endure despite legal or structural changes.[32] Of equal, if not greater, importance in this equation is the fact that whites are determined to protect their privileged status vis-à-vis blacks. Voices as diverse as Wendy Brown-Scott,[33] Derrick Bell,[34] Toni Morrison,[35] Andrew Hacker,[36] Sidney Willhelm,[37] Joe Feagin,[38] Gerald Early,[39] Angela Davis,[40] Samuel Yette,[41] and Kenneth Clark[42] make this very point. Each despairs of ever seeing an end to American racism, that historically unique combination of beliefs, attitudes, practices, and structural arrangements which perpetuate and legitimate white domination and black subordination. Clark says, "Reluctantly, I am forced to face the likely possibility that the United States will never rid itself of racism and reach true integration. . . .I am forced to recognize that my life has, in fact, been a series of glorious defeats."[43] In a similar voice Derrick Bell declares that ". . .racism is an integral, permanent and indestructible component of this society."[44]

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Racial tensions and conflicts have been particularly virulent in the area of education. Myrdal's treatment of the social realm provides clear evidence that formal race relations have a tendency to improve without the underlying reality, or conceptions, of racial difference changing:

> The important changes in the Negro problem do not consist of, or have close relations with, "social trends" in the narrower meaning of the term but are made up of changes in people's beliefs and valuations.[45]

Where Myrdal's assimilationist stance saw black institutions and culture slowly merging with those of white America, black education in fact remains a separate and problematic issue. This is primarily due to the intractability of American racial beliefs and to structured racial disadvantage. Myrdal failed to fully recognize the embeddedness of the American racial order and to anticipate its impact on education, and he overestimated the role of education in its demise.

BLACK EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY: DILEMMA OR DESIGN?

Education has been and continues to be a sticking point in the African American quest for freedom, equality, dignity, and self-determination. As Myrdal correctly points out, this is understandable given the emphasis in the American Creed on the ideal of meritocracy and its concomitant assumption that upward mobility is available to all who are willing to work hard. Schools were to be the great levelers in the American democracy, providing equal opportunity for all without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, region, or class origins. The ideal has not become reality. As a highly valued resource, education has not been made equally available to different groups in society.[46] Educational opportunities have been most available to the privileged and the powerful. Throughout history, African Americans have been denied educational opportunities. During slavery it was forbidden to teach slaves, or for slaves to learn; they lived constantly with the fear of death or torture if caught reading or writing.[47] It is therefore understandable that Black Americans attached both symbolic and pragmatic significance to education.

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Over the half century since the publication of *An American Dilemma,* several significant events combined to change the face of black education. Myrdal's study gave momentum to forces that were already in motion within the African American community, specifically a desire for and a push towards educational equality and full citizenship rights. The most significant changes occurred in the "law of the land," which ultimately led to broader changes in society. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund and a remarkable group of attorneys and social scientists pursued a successful strategy of court challenges. Attacking the principle of "separate but equal" on constitutional grounds, these legal challenges proved in a series of court cases (focused mostly on higher education) that blacks had been denied equal educational opportunities on the grounds of race. This successful legal campaign culminated in the 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, which outlawed segregation in the nation's public schools. In time, *Brown* would provide the basis for overturning Jim Crow segregation in all areas of the nation's public and private life.[48]

Even after segregation was deemed illegal, African Americans faced still other imposing barriers. De jure segregation was replaced by de facto segregation. Residential segregation continues to physically separate blacks from whites, so much so that Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton speak of an "American Apartheid" system based on race and residential location.[49] African Americans are more racially segregated than any other ethnic or racial group in America. Moreover, the segregation rates for high-status blacks are essentially the same as those for their lower-status brethren.[50] Racial segregation is the engine which drives racial inequality in this society. Areas where blacks are in the majority are characterized by poorer schools, lower school performance, more poverty, higher crime rates, fewer employment opportunities, and greater environmental deterioration.[51] Numerous schemes intended to achieve integrated schooling (e.g., busing, redistricting) have failed to soften white resistance,[52] and where some modicum of school desegregation is achieved, black students suffer (i.e., they have lower achievement, higher dropout/suspension rates, lower aspirations). In short, the legacy of denied or thwarted educational opportunities has continued. Absent an emphasis on the "quality of education," racial integration alone offers slim promise for African American

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educational improvement and eventual advancement out of the ranks of society's despised, deprived, and degraded.[53]

An unanticipated consequence of the outlawing of segregation in schools was the educational disempowerment of African Americans. Despite its obvious drawbacks, the system of separate schools allowed blacks greater control over the education of their young. Blacks did not have equal power in the decision-making processes in desegregated schools, and the numbers of black teachers and administrators dropped precipitously.[54] Previously black identified schools were more likely to be closed or merged.[55] At the same time, there was racially determined and differential allocation of human and physical resources: the better teachers and more innovative academic programs were assigned to schools that were previously white. Moreover, the close connection that existed between the black community and black schools—a connection that assured congruent values, shared commitments, and open lines of communication—was broken. Black children in desegregated schools found themselves in environments and working with personnel who were at best indifferent and often hostile to their culture and aspirations.

A review of black educational progress since *An American Dilemma* gives cause for both celebration and concern. In terms of illiteracy rates, school enrollment rates, and median years of schooling completed, blacks have achieved near parity with whites. However, several other measures highlight the vast differences that persist between black and white educational attainment in America. Blacks are significantly less likely to graduate high school and to enroll in and graduate from college. The dilemma about which Myrdal wrote is still present in the area of education. African Americans are disadvantaged in the quantity and quality of education that is made available to them over the span of their lives.

Myrdal concluded that African Americans presented this nation with a moral dilemma, since segregation and the racial caste system were inconsistent with the American Creed and its embrace of freedom, equality, and democracy. Myrdal optimistically believed that the inherent tension between a reality that consigned blacks to second-class citizenship and an idealism that defined America as the land of opportunity would eventually be reconciled in the acceptance of African Americans as full members of this society. The half century since the publication of *An American Dilemma* has proven

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Myrdal wrong. Racism, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes have been shown to be intractable. To be sure, there has been substantial progress and there have been many victories, but blacks continue to be dominated and discriminated against.[56]

White America believes in and is firmly committed to maintaining the subordinate position of blacks. Rooted in the American psyche, in the institutional life of this country, are beliefs and practices that presume whites to be innately superior to blacks and thus entitled to privilege and dominion over this "lesser race." On the whole, African Americans continue to be mired in the lowest reaches of society, consigned to this subordinate, degraded position by the historical and contemporary forces of racism. Blacks have been at the bottom for nearly four centuries and whites largely believe that this is as it should be.

Myrdal misconstrued the American dilemma as a moral dilemma. Rather, the dilemma with which America wrestles—and has wrestled for centuries—is how best "to reconcile the practical morality of American capitalism with the ideal morality of the American Creed."[57] How can a system which is inherently exploitative be accommodated within the rhetoric of equality? The country's racial climate remains in many ways unchanged from the years of Myrdal's research, giving a new urgency to the questions that many felt had been answered by the immense undertaking of *An American Dilemma* and the period of social change which followed. The historic and continuing subjugation of blacks in America is the result of conscious, willful, determined actions. The question before America now, as fifty years ago, is whether America will commit to change and to a new, more democratic future or whether it will continue to cling to its heritage of racial exploitation and oppression? How America answers this question will ultimately be the true measure of the nobleness of this country's unique experiment with democracy and our hope for survival and prosperity as a society.

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Obie Clayton, Jr.

The Churches and Social Change: Accommodation, Moderation, or Protest

MANY SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS of American society have argued that, with the exception of the family, the Black churches are incontestably the most important social institutions within the Black community. Gunnar Myrdal, writing in the 1940s, stated that the Black churches and the Black press were unique in that they were exclusively controlled by blacks. Myrdal went on to argue the importance of these institutions, especially the churches, as a forum for blacks to express themselves:

> They bring Negroes together for a common cause. They train them for concerted action. They provide an organized followership for Negro leaders. In these institutions, theories of accommodation and protest become formulated and spread. These institutions sometimes take action themselves in the power field, attempting to improve the Negro's lot or voicing the Negro protest. Even more often they provide the means by which Negro leaders and organizations, which are more directly concerned with power problems, can reach the Negro people.[1]

Critics have argued that Myrdal, despite his accolade to the Black churches, failed to see their uniqueness. They were not simply black versions of the white churches.[2] Myrdal, interested in the role of the Black churches as a power altering mechanism, saw them as serving many functions aside from the spiritual. Throughout the periods of slavery, Reconstruction, and post-Reconstruction, the Black churches acted as a buffer against the harshness of a segregated and prejudiced society, filling a basic social void. According to W. E. B.

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Du Bois, whose own opinions resembled those voiced by Myrdal, the Black churches served all the basic needs of the Black community,[3] providing an outlet for the arts, politics, and sports. In one way or another, they were seeking to make life more livable. Myrdal saw the Negro churches as a fundamental expression of the Negro community.[4]

Fifty years later, it is important to remember, as Myrdal did, that the Black churches operated then and still operate today within the dominant community; they share a theological history that cannot be studied apart from mainstream white society. Americans, and Southerners in particular, have always maintained a deep commitment to religion. Church attendance in the South is among the highest in the nation, and churches have traditionally held considerable influence. Mississippi, in 1957, had the highest number of churches per capita in the nation; approximately 78 percent of the white population aged fourteen and over were counted as church members, and the black rate was even higher.[5]

In the South, during the pre-Civil Rights era, the churches were the only forums available for blacks to express themselves where they might hold a position of power. In seeking to improve race relations and promote social change, the Black churches sought the assistance of white religious leaders, hoping that the Christian belief in the "brotherhood of man" would help them in their fight for equality. A noted Civil Rights activist, the Reverend Ed King, described the goal in very precise terms:

> [The Movement was] pleading that Black and White Christians come together, pray together, admit the problems of society, and begin to change them. This approach tried to reach the white man at his best—or at least the place where he could offer the least resistance, the poorest defense of racism.[6]

The churches, more than any other institutions, had a responsibility to provide guidance, thereby minimizing violence and social turmoil. As Will Campbell of the Southern Regional Council said, "The South is a violent place. It is not prepared to listen to talk of law, order, the Constitution. But it will hear and understand words which only the Church can speak: grace, redemption, reconciliation."[7]

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Despite their great potential for effectiveness, the churches generally responded to the Civil Rights movement with silence. The response, though partially attributable to other factors, was largely the result of political pressure applied by extremist elements to compel the churches to conform to the established orthodoxy. Such intimidation was standard operating procedure in the Southern political system, where extremist fervor tended to eliminate all opposition. From exercising economic and social pressure through well-organized Citizens Councils to passing legislation designed to penalize enemies of segregation, using the police to follow and harass nonconformists, the system constantly and effectively intimidated Black ministers and parishioners. White moderates and would-be moderates who offered any threat to the right-wing status quo or the established orthodoxy were no less threatened.

THE WHITE CHURCHES IN THE SOUTH: WHAT KINDS OF CHANGE?

In the summer immediately following the *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, Southern right-wing forces organized for the inevitable battle against integration. The atmosphere of intolerance grew rapidly in the South as extremist political forces began to develop schemes to defend segregation. As James Silver, author of *Mississippi: The Closed Society,* said:

> For whatever reason, the community sets up the orthodox view. Its people are constantly indoctrinated—not a difficult task, since they are inclined to accept the creed by circumstance. When there is no effective challenge to the code, a mild toleration of dissent is evident, provided the non-conformist is tactful and does not go far. But with a substantial challenge from the outside—to slavery in the 1850's and to segregation in the 1950's—the society tightly closes its ranks, becomes inflexible and stubborn, and lets no scruple, legal or ethical, stand in the way of the enforcement of the orthodoxy. The voice of reason is stilled and the moderate either goes along or is eliminated. Those in control during such times of crisis are certain to be extremists whose decisions are determined by their conformity to the orthodoxy.[8]

Myrdal understood that the Black churches, schools, and press could never serve as agencies of power for the "Negro caste." All they could do was "bring Negroes together for a common cause."

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In his words, they could "train them for concerted action."[9] Historically, the Black churches conformed, for the most part, to the orthodoxy of separatism. More significantly, many white religious leaders used their own churches as platforms to promote segregation and racism. Society, especially Southern society, used religious institutions to enforce tradition, to maintain orthodoxy. Those who spoke out for change risked a great deal; violent action was the most frequent response to their pleas.

The South's primary tool for enforcing segregation was its political system—an amalgamation of the executive, legislative, judicial, and police power of the state, county, and city governments. Joining in an ideological alliance with the quasi-governmental mouthpiece of white supremacy, the White Citizens Council,[10] for the most part Southern politicians, readily followed the example of Congressman (and later Governor) of Mississippi, John Bell Williams, who asserted that Mississippians could not "afford the luxury of moderation, complacency or timidity."[11]

The Southern campaigns of intimidation during the 1950s were aimed primarily at the Black churches, then perceived as leading the movement towards integration. Nor were sympathetic white churches spared. In 1960, Mississippi passed the Church Property Bill which rescinded the tax-exempt status of integrated churches. The legislation served two purposes: to warn and punish state and national denominations advocating integration; and to provide support for churches totally committed to segregation.[12] In Birmingham, Alabama, in Jackson, Mississippi, and in scores of other cities, the police arrested and threatened white church officials who opened their doors to blacks. Integration teams from the North, the common targets of these threats, understood the hazards of their activity.

Following the Birmingham church bombing in September 1963 and the death of four young girls, a few of the larger urban churches in the South began to take a more moderate stance with regard to integration. Several churches went so far as to open their doors to blacks. Deploring and condemning this liberal trend in the churches, the Citizens Councils, especially those in Mississippi and Alabama, began a resegregation campaign; they announced their readiness to assist any lay group that wished to maintain segregation. A characteristic Council newsletter of September 1963 put the matter very bluntly: "It is time to come forward with a positive plan of action

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to save these churches from integration." The plan was to have "experienced lay leaders" conduct a series of meetings to formulate "an overall plan designed to eliminate church integration entirely."[13]

Many churches, especially the small rural ones, remained silent on the Civil Rights issue, thereby tacitly supporting the right-wing defense of segregation. Still, it would be a mistake to suggest that the Southern white churches were uniform in their acceptance of the status quo. Many individual churchmen and congregations, active in aiding the movement for integration, sought genuine equality in the South. The churches probably provided more white support for the Civil Rights cause than any other single body of white institutions in the South. Because many of the Black churches provided leaders and allowed their buildings to be used as rallying points at the risk of physical violence,[14] it is tempting to conclude that organized religion led the Civil Rights movement. Such, in fact, was not the case. A close analysis of instances of support verifies James Silver's contention that "many individual preachers and a few ministerial groups have made courageous stands, but the church as a whole had placed its banner with the status quo."[15] Most of the aid for the Civil Rights movement came from maverick ministers acting without the backing of their congregations or state church leaders. When top church leaders spoke out, they rarely did so in concert. Overall, the churches' attempts at advancing the cause of Civil Rights were haphazard and fragmented. Within the intolerant framework of the South's closed society, few institutions could support individuals willing to take a moderate public position.

For the white churches in the South, the general response to political pressure was one of submission, acquiescence to the extremists in their defense of segregation. The acquiescence took two forms. The most common one was silence. Some, however, supported Southern racism, scarcely surprising when one considers the power of the extremists in the deep Southern states. The submission of the churches to such political pressure represented the collapse of the moderates in the South. Although most religious individuals refused to see God as a segregationist, their silence gave support to the extremist brand of Southern racism. Many believed that the churches had no business becoming involved in political and social matters, especially in matters as complex as race relations. While such arguments did not preclude the churches from maintaining

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their societal crusades against the traditional social vices of drinking and gambling, these were seen as very different causes.

The churches, in acquiescing in this way to the Southern racial mentality, accepted the kind of cultural identification which C. Vann Woodward, in *The Burden of Southern History,* recognized. Woodward wrote: "The conformist is not required nor expected to abandon his distinctive religion. But whether he remains a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew, his religion typically becomes subordinate or secondary to a national faith."[16] For Woodward, the goals and values of the various religious denominations closely followed those of the larger American culture; indeed, they were scarcely distinguishable. Just as American churches tended to identify with the American culture, so Southern churches identified with the Southern culture. Practically speaking, most Southern churchgoers were traditional Southerners, expressing traditional Southern viewpoints, including the support of segregation.

However reasonable such an argument may seem, it does not entirely explain the intolerance of so many congregations, including some led by liberal ministers. Their silent support for governmental leaders brazenly violent in the name of segregation, their timid acceptance of police at the church door, with the open political control of church policies, suggested a crude and unfeeling indifference to the lives and rights of blacks. Pressure, particularly political pressure, impeded any kind of clear-cut, institution-wide call for reform. In comparison with other white institutions, they might seem to be engaged, but they were not. The frustration many blacks felt was best expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail":

> I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice. . .I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but is it possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. . . ." Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the

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> white church and its leadership. . . .I felt the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead some have been outright opponents. . . .[17]

THE REACTION OF THE BLACK CHURCHES TO SOUTHERN WHITE ACQUIESCENCE

Conditions in the South during the 1940s and 1950s were difficult and demeaning for the majority of blacks. Although there were havens of social and economic progress—places like Atlanta, Georgia and Durham, North Carolina—blacks for the most part were relegated to menial jobs, living in substandard conditions. Legalized discrimination (the Jim Crow laws), persistent prejudice, and violence were as common in the post-World War II South as they had been during the period shortly after Reconstruction. Frequently cited as the major causes for the mass migration of blacks out of the South during those years, as indeed throughout the century, the migration was so pronounced that by the mid-1960s 50 percent of all blacks resided in Northern cities. Their number had been only 10 percent in 1900.[18]

Many of those who had moved north simply gave up hope of seeing any real change in the deep South. Ignoring Booker T. Washington's advice to "cast down your buckets where you are," they saw a South that remained basically unchanged, that provided no opportunity for them. Both World War I and World War II were periods of mass migration; many believed that things had to be better in the North.[19] Those who remained imagined they might ameliorate their conditions by working through existing institutions, especially churches.

Prior to 1954 racial cooperation between blacks and whites was relatively rare, though the churches, to some extent, preached racial moderation. After the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, positive relations between black and white religious leaders tended to decline. The younger and better-educated blacks found organized religion too conservative; the Black churches, in their view, were identified too closely with the dominant white religious leaders, who were advocating accommodation rather than rapid social change. Dissatisfied with the pace of change, they began to abandon the

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Black churches in large numbers, reducing substantially their capacity to provide a unified front in the Civil Rights struggle.

Despite their obvious shortcomings, the Black churches in the South provided a much-needed forum, allowing for the emotional release of feelings that could not be expressed elsewhere without risk of punishing reprisals. Because so many Black churches capitalized on the Christian belief that the "sufferings of this world" would be richly rewarded in the "afterlife," critics suggested that too much emphasis was being given to the hereafter, that this fostered a pie-in-the-sky attitude.

The Black churches, always something of a religious anomaly, sought to alter the power relations between blacks and whites, all the while maintaining a conservative theology. From the post-Reconstruction period until the early 1950s, they worked primarily behind the scenes to improve the conditions of Black Americans. The *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision changed the way Black ministers and others pressed for change. This decision prompted a nationwide discussion about the legitimacy of segregation. It prompted many clergy to speak out, though the dangers of doing so were always apparent. Provoking the violent right wing was never safe. Still, armed with the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, blacks in Montgomery, Alabama, Tallahassee, Florida, and Birmingham, Alabama began a series of boycotts of local merchants to protest the legislative gerrymandering which effectively diminished the importance of their votes. The success of these boycotts ushered in a new era. Direct action emerged as an effective tactic for achieving social change. As August Meier and Elliott Rudwick said, a new South had emerged, with a new spokesman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.[20]

THE BLACK CHURCHES IN THE 1960s AND BEYOND

Two important and historic changes had occurred in America between 1910 and 1960 which allowed for the rise of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and led to the protests, riots, and other social movements of the period. First, America had become an urban society. Migrating black populations, moving north in search of better work opportunities, often found that they lacked the resources and the education that employers demanded. There was no work

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for them, and they settled in large urban ghettos where there were few social institutions in place to handle their special needs.

Robert Franklin believed that the churches were the only established social institutions able to care for these new arrivals. The urban churches "as the institutional center of the Black community constituted the stasis of pre-migration life. It became an extended family away from home (communitas) for thousands of unemployed, hungry and new arrivals."[21] Franklin and other scholars recognized that though the Black churches in the North tried to help this large influx of migrants, many were ill-equipped to do so. Their small size and very limited budgets made any extensive outreach program impossible.

Second, in the new urban America, large numbers of blacks abandoned the churches altogether. Many sought to "redefine themselves in more secular terms,"[22] more militant, more politically active terms. Taking confidence from their success with direct action, protest, and activism, they began to demand more in respect to civil liberties, not only from the dominant white society but also from their own leaders. Myrdal had predicted this change:

> When the Negro community changes, the church will also change. It is true that the church has not given much to reforms but has rather lagged when viewed from the advanced positions of Negro youth and Negro intellectuals. But few Christian churches have ever been, whether in America or elsewhere, the spearheads of reform.[23]

While the mass migration of blacks to the North caught most religious denominations off guard, in the 1960s the churches made great efforts to develop outreach programs. These urban ministries, seeking to help new arrivals, mostly the poor, lacked the resources to deal with the grave economic and social problems for which there were no easy solutions.

Although many historians refer to the 1960s as a time of building, indeed of great creativity, the decade witnessed also the rise of a large black underclass. This coincided with an awareness of a host of new urban social problems created by white flight, the construction of highways which interrupted or destroyed neighborhoods, the migration of jobs out of the central city, and increases in crime, delinquency, and school dropout rates. To help cope with some of these problems, the Johnson administration launched its "War on

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Poverty," largely an appeal for racial cooperation.[24] While many blacks benefited from the social and economic programs of the early and mid 1960s, the vast majority did not. The proportion of black families living in poverty almost doubled between 1970 and 1990.[25] Growing poverty, increased unemployment, and a high crime rate were the most conspicuous social characteristics of the period. The new patterns of migration, which brought many blacks, manifestly ill-suited to city life, whose skills were principally in agriculture, could not fail to create problems in an urban economy dominated by manufacturing.

The percentage of black families earning less than $10,000 increased from 20.9 percent in 1970 to 26 percent in 1990. Black Americans suffered losses in all income brackets, with the exception of those earning over $35,000. One of the reasons for these grim statistics was the decline of the two-parent family within the Black community. Beginning in the 1960s, black families were increasingly headed by single females. Children in such families, lacking positive role models, were less likely to attend church and to participate in other social and communal activities.

As social and economic conditions deteriorated, African American youths, particularly young men, abandoned the churches in record numbers. The churches, which had historically attracted significant numbers of men, were now filled principally with women.[26] Secular concerns and politics replaced religion and theology: "Black power" became the rallying cry for a new generation of urban African Americans. The liberation message spread by leaders such as Stokley Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver attracted a large following in urban areas, though it did not have great appeal to black ministers and older churchgoers who hesitated to become too involved in direct action and confrontation. One of the most notable radical developments of the period was the founding of the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR).[27]

James H. Cone described the BMCR as one of the earliest attempts by Black clergy to become active in power-altering activities; the term Black power took on new significance. Cone wrote:

> BMCR represented one of the creative examples of what the Black church was called to be and to do in the 1960s. . . .All Black caucuses in white denominations seemed to be enthusiastic in their support of

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an emerging Black consciousness, politically expressed in Black Power and theologically expressed in Black theology.[28]

A few Black ministers went so far as to challenge the white churches for their inability or unwillingness to advance the cause of Civil Rights, especially in the North.[29] With black caucuses within predominantly white religious bodies calling for change, some religious leaders who had remained silent on the Civil Rights issues in the 1950s began to speak out. Something of a new ecumenical movement within the churches began to take shape.

The churches, especially the Methodist Church, began to take a more activist stance, lobbying for legislation in the area of Civil Rights and racial justice. Unfortunately, the activism proved to be short-lived. Given the enormity of the problems confronting America's cities in the 1960s, many whites and middle-class blacks abandoned the urban churches in the 1960s, resulting in a loss not only in membership but in revenue as well. Community outreach programs went unfunded; the number of voices calling for change declined; optimism gave way to hopelessness. The failure of the Black churches to react to the crises of the cities caused them to lose respect, especially among the poor.

The failure of the majority of the Black churches to foresee the problems associated with the urbanization of Black Americans, and to formulate policies and procedures adequate to the situation, was due in part to their history and theology. Though urban Black churches in the East and the North had long existed, the traditional Black denominations (e.g., Baptists and Methodists) were primarily rural in philosophy if not in origin. They were unprepared to deal with an increasingly militant urban population, and compounding their problem was a bleak financial picture which saw most of them close to bankruptcy.[30] They were incapable of strategic planning; they could not provide aid to the needy.

Some churches—indeed religions—positioned themselves to do precisely those things. The Church of God in Christ (COGIC), founded in 1935, had as one of its basic tenets the caring for the spiritual and economic needs of poor blacks, especially those who were migrating to the cities. In many ways COGIC reflected a radical shift in Black religious thought. It welcomed women into its leadership ranks to fill the void created by a lack of male members.

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Women brought the ministry to urban centers, operating day-care centers and food banks, preaching, working to educate those who came to them. While they could not be ordained, this did not preclude their service.[31]

Committed to social change, COGIC stressed the message of the "brotherhood of man" and insisted that all Christians must develop mutual respect. The theme of self-respect was emphasized in their music and ritual: drums, dancing, and spontaneous speaking hearkened back to African traditions. The Church of God in Christ, committed to empowerment, saw its ministers work to achieve Civil Rights goals through antipoverty programs, with self-improvement achieved through economic growth.

Some of the same messages made their way into another religion, Islam, increasingly popular with blacks. The Nation of Islam, like COGIC, came to life in the United States in the 1930s; its founder, Master Farad Muhammad, stressed the concept of "self-help." The self-help message of the Muslims, enunciated by its two most vocal proponents, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, had great appeal for those who had lost faith in mainstream religion.

From a historical perspective, the timing of the introduction of Islam into the Black community could not have been better. The Nation of Islam made its major strides during the 1960s and 1970s, when optimism, vision, and social activism were still possible. The teachings of Malcolm X in particular brought many Black Americans back to religion, helping them to find a place for themselves in society. It had a unique recruitment strategy. Whereas traditionally the churches had served primarily the middle and working classes, the Muslims sought the poor, the young, and, most importantly, those with criminal records. The Muslims reached out to groups in greatest need, for the most part neglected by the mainstream Protestant denominations.

Probably the single greatest contribution of Islam to Black America was the ideology of Black pride and Black power.[32] Muslim leaders, like the leaders of COGIC, were concerned above all with empowerment. Unlike many other religious leaders, the Muslim leaders did not steer clear of the Civil Rights issue. Attempting to reverse the extremist tide of resistance to human rights by cautioning Black leaders and challenging them to take proactive stances, they spoke out against the flagrant atrocities which were attribut-

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able to "Christians," calling on all whites to share collectively the burden of guilt for the racial turmoil in the United States. They gave positive support to organizations concerned with self-help.

Islam, a growing religion within the Black community, is especially popular among young black males. Lincoln and Mamiya argue that a great deal of that popularity may be attributed to the macho image projected by Malcolm X who "was viewed by many as the uncompromising critic of American society."[33] Malcolm X, believing that American society was reluctant to change, especially in the area of race relations and power distribution, argued that Black Americans had to take the initiative in altering race relations. Many who criticized the Black Muslims argued that their principal message was one of hate, which rendered all whites and Jews as the ultimate enemy.

Black nationalism, as advocated by Malcolm X and other Muslim leaders, is viewed today by many as reverse discrimination and prejudice. There may be some justification for this sentiment, all the more unfortunate because of the good work which has been done by Muslims in the Black communities, specifically their work with the poor. It would indeed be tragic if the racial extremism and cultural elitism which the Muslims argued against became their own most distinctive feature.

CONCLUSION

"All we preachers is [*sic*] supposed to do is to preach the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and Him Crucified, and that's all."[34]

As the preceding quote from Myrdal's study suggests, it was the view of most religious leaders, especially Southerners, that the churches had no business becoming involved in political and social matters such as race relations. By harassing moderate ministers, the extremist political elements in the South created a climate of fear which deterred great numbers of churchmen from speaking out. Even when the racial situation became overtly violent, when the churches had the opportunity to exert their influence, they rarely made their voices heard. Many blacks, disillusioned with the churches, saw their silence on Civil Rights issues as evidence of an unwillingness to help.

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The failure of the churches to meet the needs of urban blacks led to dramatic increases in membership in COGIC and the Nation of Islam. These religious bodies, unlike the mainstream Christian denominations, were socially concerned, intent on being proactive. The Black community, having changed, looked to a new set of institutions for help. Black churches, if they are to remain viable, will have to adapt to the changing demands of a population which is now more diverse than at any time in the past. Still, it must be said that Myrdal saw the significance of the Islamic "cults" more than fifty years ago. If the movement was smaller then, it was already antiwhite. As Myrdal explained, the Black Muslims "look to the brown peoples of Asia Minor and North Africa to save them from the whites."[35] When he wrote, the Muslims were few in number. Far more important was another antiwhite group, the African Orthodox Church, which owed its origins to the Garvey movement of the 1920s. Affiliated with the Greek Orthodox Church, it had, according to Myrdal, somewhat abated its antiwhite stance, but it was still a church of protest.[36] So, also, was the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, led by the Rev. A. Clayton Powell, which boasted eight thousand members in 1939, the largest black congregation in the city.[37] Powell was active in sponsoring community welfare work, but also in finding employ for blacks. Myrdal, half a century ago, saw that black youths were "abandoning" the churches in numbers greater than was common among whites, except, interestingly, for young Jews. He attributed the trend to "increased education and sophistication among blacks," but also to the "backwardness" of their churches, as evidenced in their "emotionalism and puritanism."[38] If, as in white America, church membership conferred respectability, blacks, on marrying, Myrdal wrote, could be expected to join a church, though not necessarily that of their parents.[39]

If Black Americans were predominantly Protestant in Myrdal's day, their church affiliations, as with whites, reflected their social standing. The greatest number attended churches that resembled "any lower class white Protestant church."[40] Except for the emotionalism characteristic of the service, there were no theological innovations worthy of mention.[41] While "race" might figure in the sermon, particularly in Northern churches, there was little in the service itself to suggest that it was a Black church. Still, the Negro

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spirituals would not be heard in a white church, and the preacher's manner—his way of speaking and his body language—like the responses of the congregation suggested a difference. Myrdal thought the difference with "lower class white churches in isolated regions" was not very great.[42] There were the same Sunday schools, the same voluntary organizations, even the same hymns, with an even more urgent need to collect money from the small congregations, to avert bankruptcy.[43]

If there was little "inter-racial cooperation" between white and Black churches in Myrdal's day, the situation today has not changed dramatically. The "insincerity of white people" was constantly alluded to.[44] Myrdal put the matter very succinctly when he wrote: "The great majority of white churches, in the North as well as in the South, thus do not want to have a substantial Negro membership. The great majority of Negroes do not seem to want to join white churches, even if they are allowed."[45] Has very much changed in half a century?

Poverty and cultural isolation were wreaking havoc then. They still do. The conditions that made the black ministry less attractive in Myrdal's day have become even more powerful since. The brightest and the most ambitious have no thought to become preachers and the consequences for the Black churches have been what Myrdal most feared—a loss of influence in the Black communities.[46] If few Christian churches had been "the spearheads of reform,"[47] Myrdal was not without hope. He looked particularly to the young, to the better educated, even to the "new cults," hoping that "emotionalism" would diminish, that the "professional evangelist" would disappear, that the sermons would be "more thought-provoking," that all this would advance the "general process of acculturation."[48] It is precisely that process which is today in question. The mixing of the races that Myrdal had so much hoped for is today being questioned, not only by those academics who speak in the name of "multiculturalism" but by those preachers and religious leaders more generally who imagine that the condition of millions of blacks will not be "ameliorated" by such means. They, in their long-standing and continuing disappointments with the white record, seek other solutions for the problems of the black people in the United States. This cannot fail to affect those religious bodies which aspire to be agencies of change, indeed agencies of power.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

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[2]C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 11, 209.

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[6]Ed King, "White Churches," unpublished manuscript, Jackson, Miss., 1969, chap. I, 5.

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[8]James Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society,* 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1966), 6.

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[12]Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, vol. II (Jackson, Miss.: Administration of Justice, 16–20 February 1965).

[13]*Jackson Daily News,* 28 September 1963.

[14]*New Orleans Times-Picayune,* 7 October 1963; and King, "White Churches," chap. I, 30.

[15]Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society,* 53.

[16]C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, La.: L. S. S. Press, 1960), 14.

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[18]August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966, 1970), 213.

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[20]Ibid., 273ff.

[21]Robert M. Franklin, "'My Soul Says Yes': The Urban Ministry of the Church of God in Christ," unpublished manuscript.

[22]Cornel West, *Prophesy, Deliverance* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Westminster Press, 1982).

[23]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 877.

[24]West, *Prophesy, Deliverance,* 280–95.

[25]Ibid.

[26]James H. Cone, *My Soul Looks Back* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1982), 91.

[27]Ibid., 76–80.

[28]Ibid., 78.

[29]Ibid., 79.

[30]Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson, *The Negro Church* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1969).

[31]Franklin, "'My Soul Says Yes': The Urban Ministry of the Church of God in Christ."

[32]Lincoln and Memiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience.*

[33]Ibid.

[34]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 876.

[35]Ibid., 862.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid., 863.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., 866.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., 867.

[44]Ibid., 868.

[45]Ibid., 871.

[46]Ibid., 876.

[47]Ibid., 877.

[48]Ibid., 878.

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When discussing the Negro church as it is and as it might come to be, it must never be forgotten that *the Negro church fundamentally is an expression of the Negro community itself.* If the church has been other-worldly in outlook and indulged in emotional ecstasy, it is primarily because the downtrodden common Negroes have craved religious escape from poverty and other tribulations. If the preachers have been timid and pussy-footing, it is because Negroes in general have condoned such a policy and would have feared radical leaders. The rivalry and factionalism, the organizational weakness and economic dependence of the Negro church, the often faltering economic and sexual morals of the preachers and their suspicion of higher education—all this reflects life as it is lived in the subordinate caste of American Negroes.

When the Negro community changes, the church also will change. It is true that the church has not given much of a lead to reforms but has rather lagged when viewed from the advanced positions of Negro youth and Negro intellectuals. But few Christian churches have ever been, whether in America or elsewhere, the spearheads of reform. That this fundamental truth is understood—underneath all bitter criticism—is seen in the fact that Negro intellectuals are much more willing to cooperate with Negro churches than white intellectuals with white churches.

Gunnar Myrdal

From *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*

Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944

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Cassia C. Spohn

Courts, Sentences, and Prisons

INTRODUCTION

GUNNAR MYRDAL CONCLUDED in *An American Dilemma* that "the whole judicial system of courts, sentences and prisons in the South is overripe for fundamental reforms."[1] Relying primarily on anecdotal accounts of differential treatment of African Americans and whites in Southern court systems, Myrdal documented widespread discrimination in assignment of counsel, bail setting, jury selection, court processing, and sentencing. Myrdal noted that although the danger of discrimination was greatest in lower state courts, where judges with limited education were more susceptible to the pressures of public opinion, it was found to some extent in all state courts in the South: "In a court system of this structure, operating within a deeply prejudiced region, discrimination is to be expected."[2]

Although Myrdal clearly was dismayed by the racial inequities he observed, he was optimistic that Southern courts would become more impartial. Myrdal saw numerous signs of change. He noted that the US Supreme Court and lower federal courts were increasingly willing to censor state courts for violating the rights of criminal defendants and that it was becoming easier for African Americans to obtain the services of competent attorneys. He also predicted that socioeconomic changes in the South, coupled with the growing activism of Civil Rights groups and the increasingly important "Negro vote,"[3] would lead to reform: "It is the author's observation that, *in principle, the average white Southerner is no longer prepared to defend racial inequality of justice.*"[4]

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Some observers might contend that Myrdal's predictions were overly optimistic and that the reforms he envisioned have not produced the results he anticipated. It is certainly true that the past fifty years have witnessed significant changes. The US Supreme Court has handed down decisions designed to protect the rights of criminal defendants and to prohibit racial discrimination in the selection of the jury pool, the use of peremptory challenges, and the imposition of the death penalty. States likewise have enacted legislation and adopted policies designed to decrease the likelihood of overt class and race-based discrimination in the processing of criminal defendants.

Despite these reforms, inequalities persist. African Americans continue to suffer direct and indirect discrimination in decisions regarding bail, charging, jury selection, and sentencing. As Mark Mauer recently concluded, "the extended reach of the criminal justice system has been far from uniform in its effects upon different segments of the population. . .as has been true historically, but even more so now, the criminal justice system disproportionately engages minorities and the poor."[5]

DECISIONS REGARDING COUNSEL AND BAIL

Myrdal found that Southern blacks suffered both class and race-based discrimination in decisions regarding appointment of counsel and bail. Although he cited no statistics or empirical evidence in support of his claims (a problem found throughout the chapter), he concluded that African Americans charged with crimes frequently were unable to obtain competent counsel or pretrial release. Myrdal admitted that poor whites faced similar problems, but argued that African Americans were at a greater disadvantage because of their race. He noted that white lawyers were reluctant to take cases with African American defendants and that bail "was most often refused or made prohibitively high to accused Negroes, particularly when the alleged crime was against whites."[6]

Right to Counsel

Myrdal clearly regarded lack of access to competent counsel as a serious problem. In fact, he concluded that success in reforming the Southern court system hinged on the establishment of "legal aid

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agencies. . .to assist poor whites and Negroes to enforce their rights under existing laws in civil and criminal cases."[7] Myrdal argued that the use of court-appointed attorneys, whom he suggested were often young and inexperienced, was insufficient. He recommended that Southern jurisdictions establish independent agencies, staffed by professional lawyers, that would not only defend those charged with crimes but would also monitor the treatment of racial minorities in courts and prisons.

In discussing the right to counsel, Myrdal stated, incorrectly, that in criminal cases courts will "appoint a lawyer for anybody who cannot afford to provide himself with proper legal aid."[8] In fact, until the early 1960s, several Southern states, in compliance with the Supreme Court's decision in *Powell* v. *Alabama,*[9] guaranteed the right to counsel only to defendants in capital cases. The Court's decision in a 1938 case, *Johnson* v. *Zerbst,*[10] required the appointment of counsel for all indigent defendants in federal criminal cases, but the requirement was not extended to the states until *Gideon* v. *Wainwright*[11] was decided in 1963.[12] In subsequent decisions the Court ruled that "no person may be imprisoned, for any offense, whether classified as petty, misdemeanor, or felony, unless he was represented by counsel,"[13] and that the right to counsel is not limited to trial, but applies to all "critical stages" in the criminal justice process.[14]

At the time the *Gideon* decision was handed down, thirteen states, including five Southern states, had no statewide requirement for appointment of counsel except in capital cases.[15] Other states relied on members of local bar associations to defend indigents, often on a pro bono basis. Following *Gideon*, it became obvious that other procedures would be required if all felony defendants were to be provided attorneys.

States moved swiftly to implement the constitutional requirements articulated in *Gideon* and the cases that followed, either by establishing public defender systems or by appropriating money for court-appointed attorneys. The number of public defender systems grew rapidly. In 1951 there were only seven public defender organizations in the United States; in 1964 there were 136; and by 1973 the total had risen to 573.[16] A 1981 survey of indigent defense services found that 66 percent of US counties used assigned counsel or contract attorneys and that 34 percent used public defender

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systems; the survey also revealed that over half of the case assignments were made within forty-eight hours of arrest.[17]

In sum, while Myrdal's recommendations regarding the establishment of independent legal aid agencies have not been implemented, significant changes have occurred. As a result of Supreme Court decisions expanding the right to counsel and the development of policies implementing these decisions, African American defendants are no longer denied legal representation at trial or at any of the other "critical stages" in the criminal justice process.[18] Although questions have been raised about the quality of legal representation provided to indigent defendants,[19] it is no longer true that "Negroes are without a voice"[20] in Southern courts.

Bail Decision-Making

Myrdal's examination of the bond and bail system was extremely brief. He noted that the system "works automatically against the poor classes."[21] He added that African American defendants, particularly those accused of crimes against whites, were more likely than white defendants to be detained prior to trial, either because the judge refused bail or because the judge set bail at an unaffordable level. Myrdal did not discuss the consequences of pretrial detention and made no specific recommendations for reforming the bail system.

The issue of bail reform did not reach the national political agenda until nearly twenty years after the publication of *An American Dilemma*. Concerns about the rights of poor defendants led to the first bail reform movement, which emerged in the early 1960s and emphasized reducing pretrial detention. Those who lobbied for reform argued that the purpose of bail was to insure the defendant's appearance in court and that the amount of bail should, therefore, not exceed the amount necessary to guarantee that the defendant would show up for all court proceedings. Proponents of this view asserted that whether a defendant was released or detained prior to trial should not depend upon his or her race or economic status. They also cited research demonstrating that the type and amount of bail imposed upon the defendant and the time spent by the defendant in pretrial detention affected the likelihood of a guilty plea, the likelihood of conviction at trial, and the severity of the sentence.[22]

Arguments such as these prompted state and federal reforms designed to reduce pretrial detention. Encouraged by the results of

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the Manhattan Bail Project, which found that the majority of indigent defendants released on their own recognizance did appear for trial,[23] local jurisdictions moved quickly to reduce reliance on money bail and to institute programs modeled after the Manhattan Bail Project. Many states revised their bail laws, and in 1966 Congress passed the Bail Reform Act, which proclaimed release on recognizance the presumptive bail decision in federal criminal cases.

Then, as Samuel Walker has noted, "the political winds shifted."[24] The rising crime rate in the 1970s generated a concern for crime control and led to a reassessment of bail policies. Critics challenged the traditional position that the only function of bail was to assure the defendant's appearance at trial. They argued that guaranteeing public safety was also a valid function of bail and that pretrial detention should be used to protect the community from "dangerous" offenders.

These arguments fueled the second bail reform movement. Conservative legislators and policymakers lobbied for reforms allowing judges to consider "public safety" when making decisions concerning the type and amount of bail.[25] By 1984, thirty-four states had enacted legislation giving judges the right to deny bail to defendants deemed dangerous to the general public.[26] Also in 1984, Congress passed a law authorizing preventive detention of dangerous defendants in federal criminal cases.[27]

The Effect of Race on Bail Decision-Making. Proponents of bail reform argued that bail decisions should rest either upon assessments of the likelihood that the defendant would appear in court or upon predictions of how dangerous the defendant might be. The problem, of course, is that there is no way to guarantee that race will not influence these assessments and predictions. As Coramae Mann has asserted, even the seemingly objective criteria used in making release on recognizance decisions and in determining dangerousness "may still be discriminatory on the basis of economic status or skin color."[28]

Studies examining the effect of race on bail decisions have yielded contradictory findings. Some researchers have concluded that bail decisions are determined primarily by legal variables such as prior record and the seriousness of the offense and that race has no effect once controls for these are taken into consideration.[29] Other re-

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searchers contend that it is the defendant's economic status, rather than his race, that determines the likelihood of pretrial release.[30] If this is the case, one could argue that bail decisions reflect *indirect* racial discrimination, since African American defendants are more likely than white defendants to be poor.

Several studies have concluded either that a defendant's race directly affects bail decisions[31] or that a defendant's race affects bail decisions only when it interacts with other variables.[32] One study, for example, found that African Americans and Native Americans were less likely than whites to be released on their own recognizance.[33] Another study found that race did not have a direct effect on bail, but did interact with a number of other variables to produce harsher bail outcomes for some types of African American defendants.[34] More specifically, the authors found that having a prior felony conviction had a greater negative effect on bail decisions for African American defendants than for white defendants, while having more education or a higher income had a greater positive effect for whites than for African Americans.

Although the findings are somewhat contradictory, it appears that the reforms instituted since the 1960s have not produced racial equality in bail decisions. There is evidence that judges in some jurisdictions continue to take race into account when deciding on the type and amount of bail. There is also evidence that race interacts with other factors to produce higher pretrial detention rates for African American defendants than for white defendants. Given the serious negative consequences of pretrial detention, these findings are cause for concern.

JURY SELECTION

Myrdal's examination of the Southern court system revealed that the typical jury was all white.[35] Myrdal noted that some courts, in response to a 1935 Supreme Court decision[36] stating that African Americans could not be systematically excluded from the jury pool, had taken steps "to have Negroes on the jury list and call them in occasionally for service."[37] He added, however, that many Southern courts, and particularly those in rural areas, had either ignored the constitutional requirement or had developed techniques "to fulfill legal requirements without using Negro jurors."[38]

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Since 1943 the Supreme Court has made it increasingly difficult for court systems to exclude African Americans from the jury pool, consistently striking down the "techniques" used by Southern jurisdictions to circumvent the requirement of racial neutrality in the selection of the venire. For example, the Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for a Georgia county to put the names of white potential jurors on white cards, the names of African American potential jurors on yellow cards, and then "randomly" draw cards to determine who would be summoned.[39] Similarly, the Court struck down the "random" selection of jurors from tax books where the names of white taxpayers were in one section, the names of African American taxpayers in another.[40] As the Court stated in *Avery* v. *Georgia,* "...the State may not draw up its jury lists pursuant to neutral procedures but then resort to discrimination at other stages in the selection process."[41]

Myrdal's analysis of the jury selection process did not address the use of peremptory challenges to exclude African Americans from the jury. This oversight is understandable. Historically, attorneys "enjoyed carte blanche freedom in exercising peremptory challenges."[42] The assumption was that these challenges were being used to achieve a fair and impartial jury. In reality, of course, peremptory challenges often were used to strike African American jurors from cases with African American defendants. Critics charged that this practice "both reduces minority participation on criminal juries and frustrates the interest of minority defendants in a jury of peers."[43]

The Supreme Court initially was reluctant to restrict the prosecutor's right to use peremptory challenges to excuse jurors on the basis of race. In the 1965 case of *Swain* v. *Alabama,* the Court ruled that the prosecutor's use of peremptory challenges to strike all six African Americans in the jury pool did not violate the equal protection clause of the Constitution. The Court reasoned:

> The presumption in any particular case must be that the prosecutor is using the State's challenges to obtain a fair and impartial jury. . . .The presumption is not overcome and the prosecutor therefore subjected to examination by allegations that in the case at hand all Negroes were removed from the jury or that they were removed because they were Negroes.[44]

The Court went on to observe that the Constitution did place some limits on the use of the peremptory challenge. The Justices stated

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that a defendant could establish a prima facie case of purposeful racial discrimination by showing that the elimination of African Americans from a particular jury was part of a pattern of discrimination in that jurisdiction.

The problem, of course, was that the defendants in *Swain*, and in the cases that followed, could not meet this stringent test. As Seymour Wishman observed, "A defense lawyer almost never has the statistics to prove a pattern of discrimination, and the state under the *Swain* decision is not required to keep them."[45] The ruling, therefore, provided no protection to the individual African American defendant deprived of a jury of his peers by the prosecutor's use of racially discriminatory strikes.

Despite harsh criticism from legal scholars and civil libertarians,[46] who argued that *Swain* imposed a "crushing burden. . .on defendants alleging racially discriminatory jury selection,"[47] the decision stood for twenty-one years. It was not until 1986 that the Court, in *Batson* v. *Kentucky*,[48] rejected *Swain*'s systematic exclusion requirement and ruled that "a defendant may establish a prima facie case of purposeful discrimination in selection of the petit jury solely on evidence concerning the prosecutor's exercise of peremptory challenges at the defendant's trial."[49] The Justices added that once the defendant makes a prima facie case of racial discrimination, the burden shifts to the state to provide a racially neutral explanation for excluding African American jurors.

Although *Batson* seemed to offer hope that the goal of a representative jury was attainable, an examination of cases decided since 1986 suggests otherwise. State and federal appellate courts have ruled, for example, that leaving one or two African Americans on the jury precludes any inference of purposeful racial discrimination on the part of the prosecutor[50] and that striking only one or two jurors of the defendant's race does not constitute a "pattern" of strikes.[51] Trial and appellate courts have also been willing to accept virtually any explanation offered by the prosecutor to rebut the defendant's inference of purposeful discrimination.[52] "The cost of forfeiting truly peremptory challenges has yielded little corresponding benefit, as a myriad of 'acceptable' explanations and excuses cloud any hope of detecting racially based motivations."[53]

Although it is no longer true that "the vast majority of the rural courts in the Deep South have made no pretense of putting Negroes

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on jury lists, much less calling or using them in trials,"[54] the jury selection process remains racially biased. Prosecutors continue to use the peremptory challenge to exclude African American jurors from cases with African American defendants[55] and appellate courts continue to rule that their "racially neutral" explanations adequately meet the standards articulated in *Batson*. Supreme Court decisions notwithstanding, the peremptory challenge remains an obstacle to impartiality.

COURT PROCESSING AND SENTENCING

Myrdal's examination of the Southern court system uncovered widespread racial discrimination in case processing and sentencing. Myrdal observed that cases involving African American defendants were handled informally and with a lack of dignity, and that convictions often were obtained upon presentation of "scanty evidence." He noted that grand juries routinely refused to indict whites for crimes against African Americans, and added that "it is notorious that practically never have white lynching mobs been brought to court in the South, even when the killers are known to all in the community and are mentioned by name in the local press."[56]

A common theme in Myrdal's analysis of court processing and sentencing is the differential treatment of interracial and intraracial crimes. Noting that "it is part of the Southern tradition to assume that Negroes are disorderly and lack elementary morals,"[57] Myrdal concluded that African American defendants who victimized other African Americans were treated with great leniency. He observed that white Southerners viewed the more lenient treatment of black-on-black crime "as evidence of the friendliness of Southern courts toward Negroes," but that "the Southern Negro community is not at all happy about this double standard of justice."[58]

According to Myrdal, interracial crimes evoked very different responses from Southern courts, depending on the race of the offender. Whites who committed crimes, even very serious crimes, against African Americans were rarely convicted; those who were convicted received only the mildest punishment. African Americans charged with (or even suspected of) offenses against whites, on the other hand, were treated very harshly. Myrdal noted that African Americans charged with serious crimes against whites often faced a

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white lynching mob. He stated that in situations like this, "the court makes no pretense at justice; the Negro must be condemned, and usually condemned to death, before the crowd gets him."[59]

Race and Pretrial Decisions

Since 1943 there has been a virtual explosion of research investigating the relationship between a defendant's race and court processing decisions. Although most of this research has focused on the effect of race on sentencing, there are a number of studies that examine pretrial decisions for evidence of racial discrimination. As noted earlier, several studies have analyzed the relationship between race and bail decisions. The results of these studies are contradictory, but some do conclude that race affects the type and amount of bail.

There also is evidence that prosecutors' charging decisions are affected by race. An analysis of the prosecutor's decision to reject or dismiss charges against defendants in Los Angeles County, for example, revealed a pattern of discrimination in favor of female defendants and against African American and Hispanic defendants.[60] A study by Joan Petersilia,[61] on the other hand, found that white suspects were *more* likely than African American or Hispanic suspects to be formally charged. Her analysis of the reasons given for charge rejection led her to conclude that the higher dismissal rates for nonwhite suspects reflected the fact that "blacks and Hispanics in California are more likely than whites to be arrested under circumstances that provide insufficient evidence to support criminal charges."[62]

Two studies concluded that both the race of the defendant *and* the race of the victim are significant factors. Gary LaFree[63] found that African Americans who were arrested for raping white women were more likely to be charged with felonies than were either African Americans arrested for raping African American women or whites arrested for raping white women. Another study found that defendants arrested for murdering whites were more likely to be indicted for first-degree murder than those arrested for murdering blacks.[64]

THE EFFECT OF RACE ON SENTENCING

Fifty years after the publication of *An American Dilemma,* the issue of racial discrimination in sentencing continues to evoke controversy

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and spark debate. Citing statistics showing that African American males account for one-half of all state and federal prisoners,[65] critics charge that African American criminal defendants are more likely to be incarcerated, and are incarcerated for longer periods of time, than are white defendants. They argue that judges' sentencing decisions are racially biased. Other researchers suggest that the harsher sentences imposed on African American defendants reflect not racial discrimination on the part of judges, but the fact that African American defendants commit more serious crimes and have more serious prior criminal records than do white defendants. They argue that racial disparities in sentencing will disappear once these legal factors are taken into consideration.

There is now a substantial body of research examining the relationship between race and sentence severity.[66] Early studies consistently documented overt bias against African Americans,[67] but more recent studies have produced contradictory findings. These more methodologically rigorous studies have not always supported the proposition that "blacks or other nonwhites will receive more severe punishment than whites for all crimes, under all conditions, and at similar levels of disproportion over time."[68] Although a number of studies have found that African Americans are sentenced more harshly than whites,[69] others have found either that there are no significant racial differences[70] or that African Americans are sentenced more leniently than whites.[71]

The failure of research to produce uniform findings of racial discrimination in sentencing has led to conflicting conclusions. Some researchers[72] assert that racial discrimination in sentencing has declined over time and contend that the predictive power of race, once relevant legal factors are taken into account, is quite low. Others[73] claim that discrimination has not declined or disappeared but simply has become more subtle and difficult to detect. These researchers argue that race affects sentence severity *indirectly* through its effect on variables such as bail status,[74] type of attorney,[75] or type of disposition,[76] or that race *interacts* with other variables and affects sentence severity only in some types of cases,[77] in some types of settings,[78] or for some types of defendants.[79]

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Differential Treatment of Interracial and Intraracial Crime

As noted above, Myrdal emphasized differences in the treatment of interracial and intraracial crime in Southern courts. He observed that African Americans who victimized whites received the harshest punishment, while African Americans who offended against other African Americans were often "acquitted or given a ridiculously mild sentence."[80] Myrdal also noted that "it is quite common for a white criminal to be set free if his crime was against a Negro."[81] Recent empirical research confirms these conclusions.

Race and Sentences Imposed for Sexual Assault. There have been a number of studies comparing the processing of interracial and intraracial sexual assaults. LaFree[82] examined the impact of the race of the offender/victim pair on the disposition of sexual assault cases in Indianapolis. He found that African American men who sexually assaulted white women were sentenced more severely than were other defendants, while African American men who assaulted African American women were sentenced more leniently than were other defendants. Anthony Walsh[83] reached a similar conclusion when examining the sentences imposed on African American and white defendants convicted of sexual assault in a metropolitan Ohio county; he found that neither the defendant's race nor the victim's race affected sentence severity. Further analysis, however, revealed that black-on-white sexual assaults received more severe sentences than black-on-black assaults.

My study of sentences imposed on defendants convicted of violent felonies in Detroit also highlighted the importance of testing for race-of-victim and type-of-crime effects.[84] When I examined the sentences imposed on all felony defendants, I found that the race of the offender/victim pair did not affect sentence severity in the predicted manner. When I analyzed the effect of race on sentence severity *separately* for the various types of crimes, on the other hand, I found that race did influence judges' sentencing decisions in sexual assault and murder cases. African Americans who sexually assaulted whites faced a greater risk of incarceration than either African Americans who sexually assaulted African Americans or whites who sexually assaulted whites; similarly, African Americans who murdered whites received longer sentences than did offenders in the other two categories. For these two crimes, I found discrim-

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ination based on both the race of the offender *and* the race of the victim.

Race and the Death Penalty. Myrdal devoted surprisingly little attention to the issue of racial discrimination in the application of the death penalty. Citing statistics on the numbers of African Americans and whites sentenced to death, he simply noted that "the South makes the widest application of the death penalty, and Negro criminals come in for much more than their share of the executions."[85]

Statistics collected since the early 1940s suggest that little has changed, in the South or elsewhere. African Americans continue to be executed at a disproportionately high rate. Over 50 percent of the prisoners executed between 1930 and 1977 were African Americans; indeed, nearly 90 percent of those executed for rape from 1930 to 1977 were African Americans,[86] and most were African Americans convicted of raping white women.[87] Between 1977 and 1992, 157 persons were executed in sixteen states; of these, ninety-four (60 percent) were white and sixty-three (40 percent) were black.[88]

African Americans are also overrepresented among those sentenced to death. Data collected by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Legal Defense and Educational Fund (NAACP-LDF) indicate that nearly 40 percent of the current death row inmates in the United States are African Americans; the data also reveal that there is a disproportionate number of minorities awaiting death in most of the thirty-five states with capital punishment statutes.[89] In 1992, for example, the percentage of African Americans on death row was 64 percent (84/132) in Illinois, 60 percent (82/137) in Pennsylvania, 59 percent (30/51) in Mississippi, 54 percent (20/37) in Louisiana, and 53 percent (59/111) in Ohio.[90]

Although these statistics indicate racial disparity in the application of the death penalty, they do not prove that states impose the death sentence in a racially discriminatory manner. Recent studies of the imposition of the death penalty, however, suggest that the disparities do reflect discrimination. There is a substantial body of research demonstrating that African Americans who murder whites are much more likely to be sentenced to death than are African

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Americans who murder other African Americans, or whites who murder either African Americans or whites.[91] The most widely cited of these studies[92] found that defendants convicted of killing whites were over four times as likely to receive a death sentence as defendants convicted of killing blacks. David Baldus and his colleagues also found that African Americans who killed whites had the greatest likelihood of receiving the death penalty.

Some commentators have questioned the national significance of findings of victim-based racial discrimination in the capital sentencing process, noting that almost all of the studies address capital sentencing in Southern states. Recent research by Samuel Gross and Robert Mauro,[93] however, demonstrates that discrimination based on the race of the victim is not confined to the South. Gross and Mauro found capital sentencing disparities by the race of the victim in each of the eight states—Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Mississippi, Virginia, and Arkansas—included in their study. They concluded that their data showed "a clear pattern" of victim-based discrimination "unexplainable on grounds other than race. . . ."[94]

Evidence such as that cited above has been used to mount constitutional challenges to the imposition of the death penalty. African American defendants convicted of raping or murdering whites have claimed that the death penalty is applied in a racially discriminatory manner in violation of both the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment. These claims have been consistently rejected by federal appellate courts. In a series of decisions, the Courts of Appeals ruled, first, that the empirical studies used to document systematic racial discrimination did not take every variable related to capital sentencing into account and, second, that the evidence presented did not demonstrate that the appellant's *own* sentence was the product of discrimination.[95]

The Supreme Court addressed the issue of victim based racial discrimination in the application of the death penalty in the case of *McCleskey* v. *Kemp*.[96] Warren McCleskey, an African American, was convicted and sentenced to death in Georgia for killing a white police officer during the course of an armed robbery. McCleskey claimed that the Georgia capital sentencing process was administered in a racially discriminatory manner. In support of his claim, he

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offered the results of the study conducted by Baldus and his colleagues.[97] As noted above, this study found that African Americans who were convicted of murdering whites had the greatest likelihood of receiving the death penalty.

The Supreme Court rejected McCleskey's Fourteenth and Eighth Amendment claims. Although the majority accepted the validity of the Baldus study, they nonetheless refused to accept McCleskey's argument that the disparities documented by Baldus signaled the presence of unconstitutional racial discrimination. The Court argued that the disparities were "unexplained" and stated that "at most, the Baldus study indicates a discrepancy that appears to correlate with race."[98] The Court also ruled that the Baldus study was "clearly insufficient to support an inference that any of the decisionmakers in McCleskey's case acted with discriminatory purpose."[99]

Legal scholars and civil libertarians have questioned the Supreme Court's reasoning in *McCleskey*. Citing the inconsistency inherent in assuming the validity of the Baldus study but then refusing to acknowledge the existence of racial discrimination, Gross and Mauro conclude that "the central message of the *McCleskey* case is all too plain; de facto racial discrimination in capital sentencing is legal in the United States."[100]

Racial Discrimination in Sentencing: Summary and Analysis

Research conducted since the publication of *An American Dilemma* suggests that racial discrimination in sentencing persists, in the South and elsewhere. It is no longer true that whites who are accused of crimes against African Americans are routinely "set free" or that African Americans who are suspected of raping or murdering whites are routinely threatened by white lynching mobs bent on vengeance. Although these types of overt racism have been eliminated, discrimination in sentencing has not. African Americans convicted of crimes against whites, and particularly those convicted of sexual assault or murder, continue to be punished more harshly than other offenders. They are more likely than other offenders, particularly African Americans who victimize other African Americans, to be sentenced to prison or to death.

Explanations for Disparate Treatment. Researchers have advanced two interrelated explanations for the harsher treatment of crimes

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involving African American offenders and white victims, and the more lenient treatment of crimes involving African American offenders and African American victims. The first explanation builds on conflict theory's premise that the law is applied to maintain the power of the dominant group and to control the behavior of individuals who threaten that power.[101] It suggests that crimes involving black offenders and white victims are punished most harshly because they pose the greatest threat to "the system of racially stratified state authority."[102]

Researchers have advanced a similar explanation for the harsher treatment of African Americans who sexually assault whites. Using the concept of sexual stratification, LaFree[103] argues that one measure of the dominant group's power is its ability to control sexual access to women in the dominant group, who are regarded as the scarce and valuable sexual property of men of their own race. The sexual assault of a white woman by an African American man threatens the power of the dominant group by violating the group's sexual property rights. This, according to Walsh, "accounts for the strength of the taboo attached to inter-racial sexual assault."[104] It also explains why sexual assaults of African American women, who are seen as less valuable sexual "commodities," are perceived as less serious crimes.

The second explanation for the harsher penalties imposed on those who victimize whites emphasizes the race of the victim rather than the racial composition of the victim/offender pair. This explanation suggests that crimes involving African American victims are not taken seriously and/or that crimes involving white victims are taken very seriously; it suggests that the lives of African American victims are devalued relative to the lives of white victims. Thus, crimes against whites will be punished more severely than crimes against African Americans regardless of the race of the offender.

Most researchers have failed to explain adequately *why* those who victimize whites are treated more harshly than those who victimize African Americans. Gross and Mauro[105] suggest that the explanation, at least in capital cases, may hinge on the degree to which jurors are able to identify with the victim. The authors argue that jurors take the life-or-death decision in a capital case very seriously. To condemn a murderer to death thus requires something more than sympathy for the victim. Jurors will not sentence the

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defendant to death unless they are particularly horrified by the crime, and they will not be particularly horrified by the crime unless they can identify or empathize with the victim:

> In a society that remains segregated socially if not legally, and in which the great majority of jurors are white, jurors are not likely to identify with black victims or to see them as family or friends. Thus jurors are more likely to be horrified by the killing of a white than of a black, and more likely to act against the killer of a white than the killer of a black.[106]

The same line of reasoning obviously could be applied to judicial sentencing decisions. One might argue that judges, the majority of whom are white, will identify more readily with white victims and thus will be more horrified by crimes against whites. As a consequence, they will be more willing to impose harsh penalties on those who victimize whites.

CONCLUSION

The court system described by Myrdal in *An American Dilemma* no longer exists, in the South or elsewhere. Reforms mandated by the US Supreme Court or adopted voluntarily by the states have eliminated much of the overt racism against African American criminal defendants documented by Myrdal. Implementation of these reforms, however, has not produced equality of justice. African Americans who find themselves in the arms of the law continue to suffer discrimination in court processing and sentencing.

Myrdal described a court system characterized by flagrant racism against African American criminal defendants. Most of these blatant injustices have been eliminated. In the 1990s, whites who commit crimes against African Americans are not beyond the reach of the criminal justice system, African Americans suspected of crimes against whites do not receive "justice" at the hands of white lynching mobs, and African Americans who offend against other African Americans are not immune from punishment. As a result of reforms instituted during the past fifty years, African American criminal defendants are no longer routinely denied bail and then tried by all-white juries without attorneys to assist them in their defense.

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Despite these significant changes, discrimination persists. Social scientists and legal scholars have shown that the race of the defendant continues to affect decisions regarding bail, charging, jury selection, and sentencing. Some researchers conclude that race has a direct and obvious effect on these decisions; they contend that African Americans are more likely than whites to be detained, charged, sentenced to prison, or sentenced to death.

Other researchers conclude that discrimination in court processing and sentencing has become more subtle and difficult to detect. They assert that discrimination against African Americans is not universal but is confined to certain types of cases, certain types of settings, and certain types of defendants. These researchers argue, for example, that African American defendants who murder or rape whites will be punished more harshly than other defendants. They also suggest that being unemployed, having a prior criminal record, or being detained prior to trial have more negative effects on court outcomes for African Americans than for whites.

In sum, while the reforms envisioned by Myrdal may have eliminated the more obvious examples of racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, they have not produced an equitable, or color blind, system of justice. Fifty years after the publication of *An American Dilemma*, African Americans continue to suffer discrimination at the hands of criminal justice officials in the United States.

ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal et al., *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 555.

[2]Ibid., 550.

[3]Ibid., 556.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Mark Mauer, *Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem* (Washington, D.C.: The Sentencing Project, 1990).

[6]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 548.

[7]Ibid., 556.

[8]Ibid., 548.

[9]*Powell* v *Alabama,* 287 US 45 (1932).

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[10]*Johnson* v *Zerbst,* 304 US 458 (1938).

[11]*Gideon* v *Wainwright,* 372 US 335 (1963).

[12]*Gideon* v. *Wainwright* required the states to provide counsel for indigent defendants charged with felonies. In 1972 the Supreme Court ruled that "no person may be imprisoned for any offense, whether classified as petty, misdemeanor, or felony, unless he was represented by counsel." *Argersinger* v *Hamlin,* 407 US 25 (1972).

[13]*Argersinger* v *Hamlin,* 407 US 25 (1972).

[14]A defendant is entitled to counsel at every stage "where substantial rights of the accused may be affected" that require the "guiding hand of counsel." *Mempa* v *Rhay,* 389 US 128 (1967). These critical stages include arraignment, preliminary hearing, entry of a plea, trial, sentencing, and the first appeal.

[15]Anthony Lewis, *Gideon's Trumpet* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

[16]Lisa J. McIntyre, *The Public Defender: The Practice of Law in the Shadows of Repute* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[17]Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Defense Systems: A National Survey* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1984).

[18]In a series of cases, the US Supreme Court decided that the right to counsel is not limited to a trial, but applies to all critical stages in the process. *Mempa* v *Rhay,* 389 US 128 (1967).

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[40]*Whitus* v *Georgia,* 385 US 545 (1967).

[41]*Avery* v *Georgia,* 345 US 559 (1953) at 562.

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[43]Brian J. Serr and Mark Maney, "Racism, Peremptory Challenges, and the Democratic Jury: The Jurisprudence of a Delicate Balance," *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 79 (1988): 1–65.

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[45]Seymour Wishman, *Anatomy of a Jury: The System on Trial* (New York: Times Books, 1986).

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[47]Serr and Maney, "Racism, Peremptory Challenges, and the Democratic Jury," 13.

[48]*Batson* v *Kentucky,* 476 US 79 (1986) at 93–94.

[49]Ibid., 96.

[50]*United States* v *Montgomery,* 819 F2d 851. The Eleventh Circuit, however, rejected this line of reasoning in *Fleming* v *Kemp,* 794 F2d 1478 (11th Cir 1986) and *United States* v *David,* 803 F2d 1567 (11th Cir 1986).

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[58]Ibid.

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[82]LaFree, *Rape and Criminal Justice.*

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[84]Spohn, "Crime and the Social Control of Blacks."

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[97]Baldus et al., "Monitoring and Evaluating Contemporary Death Penalty Systems."

[98]*McCleskey* v *Kemp,* 107 SCt 1777.

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[99]*McCleskey* v *Kemp,* 107 SCt 1769.

[100]Gross and Mauro, *Death & Discrimination,* 212.

[101]Quinney, *The Social Reality of Crime*; Austin Turk, *Criminality and Legal Order* (New York: Rand McNally, 1969).

[102]Hawkins, "Beyond Anomalies," 726.

[103]LaFree, *Rape and Criminal Justice.*

[104]Walsh, "The Sexual Stratification Hypothesis," 155.

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It is the author's observation that, *in principle, the average white Southerner is no longer prepared to defend racial inequality of justice.* Much of the judicial discrimination against Negroes in the South seems to be backed or tolerated by public opinion because of carelessness and ignorance in regard to the Negro, rather than by an intentional and considered aim to discriminate. As far as public opinion is part of the problem, the task is, therefore, mainly one of adult education. White people must be taught to understand the damaging effects upon the whole society of a system of justice which is not equitable. Means must be found to bring the pressing problems of crime prevention, and of punishment and prison reform, into the awareness of the general public.

It is astonishing to observe how far to the background these problems are pushed in America, and how deep the common ignorance of them is even in the higher classes. Most people discuss crime as if it had nothing to do with social conditions and was simply an inevitable outcome of personal badness. Southern whites tend to exaggerate the extent of Negro crime and tend to under-estimate the extent of white crime: one of the results is that they consider crime and prison reform part of the Negro problem and therefore not to be discussed.

Gunnar Myrdal

From *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*

Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944

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William Darity, Jr.

The Undesirables, America's Underclass in the Managerial Age: Beyond the Myrdal Theory of Racial Inequality

In 1944, GUNNAR MYRDAL OPENED chapter 17 of *An American Dilemma,* "The Mechanics of Economic Discrimination as a Practical Problem," with the following decidedly pessimistic commentary:

> The picture of the economic situation of the Negro people is dark. The prospects for the future...are discouraging. The main practical problem must be how to open up new possibilities for Negroes to earn a living by their labor.[1]

Today, fifty years after the publication of *An American Dilemma,* we must ask whether blacks will be significant participants in twenty-first century America. Opening up jobs from which African Americans have been excluded by discriminatory practices remains an important issue, but it is subordinate to the question of the prospects for the inclusion of Black Americans in this nation's future, given the comprehensive nature of discrimination.

Since World War II federal antidiscrimination measures have been adopted of a scope that Myrdal and his collaborators could hardly have anticipated in the early 1940s. In fact, in chapter 17 of *An American Dilemma,* Myrdal expressed great concern that the piecemeal adoption of efficacious, nondiscriminatory policies by individual employers, cities, and states would lead them to be overrun by "Negroes":

> Suppose that an individual employer would entirely ignore the race of those applying for work at his shop and would consider just the

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> individual capacities of the job-seekers, white or black. The fact that most other employers exclude Negroes means that the individual employer would have a disproportionate number of Negroes applying for his jobs. The rumor about his unusual behavior would draw Negro workers from other localities, and he might soon find a majority of Negroes on his labor force. The consequence might be that his establishment would be shunned by white labor, and it is not impossible that the result would be an almost all-Negro shop. The best he can do if he wants to favor the Negro, without having to face such consequences, is to fix the percentage of Negro workers; but that means giving up the principle of selecting Negro and white workers on an individual basis.
>
> White workers, of course, are up against the same problem, and they have even more reason to be concerned about it than have the employers. Every individual municipality, and even every state, is in a similar situation. Let us imagine that a certain state, by means of strongly enforced legislation, would succeed in abolishing most racial discrimination in the economic sphere. If similar strong measures were not taken simultaneously by other states as well, the result would be a tremendous increase in in-migration of Negroes to that state. . . .[2]

Myrdal constructed a hypothetical circumstance under which quotas posed an alternative to the "all-Negro shop." He prescribed quotas as a means of keeping the numbers of (presumably *qualified*) blacks down. In principle, the national antidiscrimination measures should have obviated Myrdal's "Negro in-migration" problem altogether. Preventing excessive "Negro in-migration" into particular states has not, however, proven to be the major legacy of the Civil Rights era.

Myrdal's failure to undertake a serious class-analytical study of American society, in conjunction with the phenomenon of racial disparity, contributed to his inability to identify the material basis for racial/ethnic discrimination in the society's hierarchical structure. Indeed, Myrdal's vision of "the mechanics of economic discrimination" is so strongly driven by perceptions, attitudes, and ideology that one must presume that if the political will had evolved to adopt antidiscrimination measures, racial prejudice on the part of the white political majority must have been sharply in decline.

For Myrdal the explanatory core of *An American Dilemma* lay in what he termed "the 'principle of cumulation,' also commonly

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called the 'vicious circle'," an analytical scheme drawn from physics which Myrdal felt had potential for wide application in the social sciences.[3] The "vicious circle" refers to the downward (negative) spiral precipitated by the adverse effects of white prejudice and associated limitations on black workplace opportunities.[4] Beliefs about "the Negro" become a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading Myrdal to characterize the pattern of job restriction as a "self-perpetuating color bar."

This theoretical approach leaves the door open for the emergence of an alternative path, a virtuous circle of improvement for blacks.[5] Presumably, the political successes of the Civil Rights movement could have gone hand in hand with dramatic changes in white attitudes, which could then have triggered a major upturn in the social and economic "standards" of African Americans. In the early 1970s numerous economists claimed that the previous two decades had, in fact, been a period of dramatic economic progress for blacks. Using the Myrdal framework, it would follow that the subsequent decade should have been one of continued advancements. But that was not the case. Not only have the claims of "dramatic progress" been challenged, but no one can seriously argue that the 1980s displayed a further decrease in racial economic disparity.[6] Moreover, the black-white gap in the United States does not ratchet up and down with every detectable change in white racial beliefs, as Myrdal's hypothesis would have it. A diminution in white prejudice does not mean that blacks instantly can enter fields from which they were excluded previously.

Myrdal recognized that discrimination was a tool used by white workers to preserve their occupational turf:

> When once the white workers' desires for social prestige become mobilized against the Negroes in this way, when they have come to look upon Negroes as different from themselves and consequently do not feel a common labor solidarity with them, "economic interests" also will back up discrimination. By excluding Negroes from the competition for jobs, the white workers can decrease the supply of labor in the market, hold up wages and secure employment for themselves. . . .[7]

But in Myrdal's theoretical framework such "economic interests" are secondary to racial attitudes. In this respect, the Myrdal theory

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is not far removed from the conventional neoclassical economists' approach to racial restriction in labor markets that finds its anchor in a "taste for discrimination" on the part of one group toward another. According to the neoclassical theory, if members of both groups are equally capable of performing the work, employer competition will eventually lead to segregated workforces but there will be no difference in pay between the groups. Therefore, the neoclassical approach *theoretically* does not result in persistent economic disparity. Precisely the same charge can be made about Myrdal's analysis.

Oliver Cox, in a profound critique of *An American Dilemma*, characterized Myrdal's emphasis on attitudes—the "American Creed," racial beliefs, etc.—as a "mystical" approach to race relations. Cox proposed that racial discrimination must instead be understood in the context of class relations in the United States and the policies pursued by the ruling classes to preserve their political control. In the process, Cox argued that discrimination was a product of the capitalist class' pursuit of a divide-and-rule strategy vis-à-vis the working class.[8]

Cox's critique is brilliant but suffers from two limitations. First, the divide-and-rule argument tends to minimize the agency of white laborers in pursuing their own interests through discrimination. Second, and more fundamental, Cox divides Americans into two classes—capitalists and workers, in all their ethnic and geographic varieties—and does not account for the so-called "underclass."

In what follows, I will develop an analysis that places racial disparity and discrimination in a context that goes beyond Myrdal in the direction charted by Cox.

The central question I would like to pose at the start is whether the presence of an underclass, disproportionately black, is a permanent phenomenon. Has American society become a caste-ridden civilization, reproducing the same social status from generation to generation for those both at the bottom and at the top of America's hierarchy? Has social mobility slowed considerably over the course of the current century? If so, what are the implications for racial inequality?

Addressing these critical questions requires a systematic inquiry into the class transformation that has occurred since the close of the nineteenth century, the transition from the capitalist mode of pro-

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duction to a managerial society. This transformation is characterized by the supplanting of the authority of financial power and monied property by the authority of mental power and knowledge property.

In a recent book, Harvard political economist Robert Reich, currently serving as the US Secretary of Labor, partitioned the US (and the global) occupational structure into three broad categories: "routine production" jobs, "in-person server" jobs, and "symbolic analyst" jobs. According to Reich, the first category, which includes the traditional, well-paid blue-collar jobs, is in demise; the second category, which includes retail sales workers and health-care providers, is in a holding pattern; and the third category, which includes academics and artists, is experiencing ascension on a global scale.[9] The third category corresponds to what I call the managerial class.

In a more substantively class-analytical examination of the changing patterns of social stratification in the modern world, Barbara and John Ehrenreich have examined the rise of the professional-managerial class, while the late Nicos Poulantzas referred to "the new petty bourgeoisie"; Alvin Gouldner characterized the rise to social dominance of intellectuals and the intelligentsia as the rise of a "new class"; and David Lebedoff refers to "the new elite."[10] All of these studies, developed from a Marxist perspective on class, long predate former Vice President Quayle's concerns about "the cultural elite."

We live in the era of selection by performance on IQ and other standardized tests. Measured or "general" intelligence was largely irrelevant to the world that preceded the current century.[11] The era of dominance of the business enterprise is coming to a close.

The continuing successful transition from capitalism to the managerial estate is obscured by developments in Eastern Europe, which have been taken as a signal of the collapse of socialism on an international scale and the rejuvenation of the regime of private enterprise. In fact, what is masked by surface events is the ongoing preeminence of the intellectuals, the intelligentsia, and the technocrats. The surge toward political reform, the embrace of democratization, the attempt to overturn totalitarian governance, and the unleashing of "market forces" in effect mean a turn from the control of one group of social managers predisposed toward polit-

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ical and economic bureaucratic authoritarianism to a different group predisposed toward electoral politics and greater reliance on the private sector. And many of the free marketers still find political authoritarianism quite appealing.

Marx's fundamental law of motion for bourgeois society—the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall—led to his famous conclusion that capitalism would come to an end under the weight of its own contradictions.[12] This conclusion has been deemed false even by Marx's leftist sympathizers who see the power of corporate capital in every facet of their lives, often failing to investigate carefully their own position within the social matrix. Unquestionably, the working class has not attained power in the United States, nor, arguably, anywhere else for that matter. But the end of capitalism need not usher in a "dictatorship of the proletariat." Instead, the winding down of capitalism and the winding up of managerial society ushers in a "dictatorship of the intellectuals." Marx's prediction of closure to capitalism can unfold without empowerment of the masses. Indeed, the nature of "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe prior to the 1990s is suggestive of the bureaucratic anonymity of a particularized version of managerial society rather than Marx's vision of socialism.[13]

The newly ascendant managerial class finds its basis for power in its control over knowledge and information. It controls access to decisionmaking positions within the institutions that coalesce under the labels of government, universities, think tanks, and nonprofit foundations. Its functional role—the role that gives it its class character—is to identify, explain, and offer solutions to social problems, and to direct cultural and ideological developments. The distinguishing feature of this class is the combination of specialized, expert knowledge with advanced educational credentials.

In contrast, the once dominant bourgeois class found its basis for power in its control over finance and production. It exercised its power via the business enterprise. Its functional role was to increase productivity.

The shift toward the managerial class is reflected in the association between social status in modern America and the acquisition of degrees and/or having studied or worked at the "top" institutions with the "best" persons. Admiration, respect, and envy center more strongly upon the accumulation of credentials than the accumula-

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tion of wealth. The attention that post-World War II economists have devoted to Adam Smith's concept of "human capital" indicates the shift in emphasis from the acquisition of wealth to the acquisition of educational credentials, although economists tend to conflate the two since one of the perquisites of advanced education is typically an above average income.[14]

Autonomy of the managerial class is contingent on government expansion. The New Deal provided a springboard for managerial independence from the leash of corporate capital. Additional post-New Deal policy interventions—in particular the Great Society programs of the 1960s—further extended the prerogatives of the managerial class. Unlike the bourgeois class, which preferred limited government within a "structure of natural rights," the managerial class' impulse always has been toward unlimited government and, hence, unlimited terrain for managerial planning.[15]

With the exception of a 16 percent growth rate in the 1960s, the size of the federal government's workforce has remained fairly stable over the course of the post-World War II era. However, the composition of federal government employment has changed dramatically since 1960, toward a preference for persons with Reich's "symbolic-analytic" skills. Between 1960 and 1980 the number of engineers in the federal government rose more than 50 percent, the number of computer specialists rose 600 percent, the number of attorneys rose 100 percent, and the number of social scientists, psychologists, and welfare workers rose 230 percent.[16] Between 1929 and 1989 overall employment rose 146 percent, and employment in government jobs rose 474 percent.[17]

The origins of the managerial class can be traced to the decision of the corporate elite in the late nineteenth century to develop a cadre of professionals to supervise the working class both inside and outside the factory. Corporate finance and corporate interests went hand in hand with the professionalization of medicine, social work, engineering, law, and higher education.[18]

With the expansion of the managerial state after the Great Depression came more troubles for corporate capital. These took the form of complaints over a rising wage floor attributed to social transfer programs, an over-reaching regulatory apparatus, and excessive wage demands by trade unions, particularly in the 1970s when corporate capital undertook a pronounced withdrawal from

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productive investment (a capital strike). The growth slowdown brought to the surface a critical ideological division among the members of the managerial class and provided an opportunity for corporate capital to stage a counterrevolution.

From this perspective the Reagan administration, and in a more clumsy fashion the Bush administration, can be interpreted as part of a capitalist counterrevolution. Reaganomics in its ideal form sought to recreate the labor market conditions of the 1920s, thereby promoting an old-fashioned capitalist boom. In addition, the fall in the proportion of total employment attributable to government jobs in the 1980s indicates the counterrevolutionary push to contain the growth of the public sector.[19]

To gain electoral support, the Reagan and Bush administrations had to forge an alliance with the working class, which was generally disgruntled with the liberal agenda of the past forty years. The alliance was forged on issues such as the status of the family, the quality of education, social stability and the nation's moral climate, and the federal deficit. It should be noted that the managerial class built the New Deal and the Great Society by forging a similar alliance with the working class.

One of the problems the counterrevolutionaries faced was the fact that they had to rely on members of the managerial class to mount the ethical and ideological case for their restoration to power. There are members of the managerial class who speak for corporate capital not solely because of the pecuniary advantage (which can be substantial) but out of intellectual conviction. This reveals both the strength and the weakness of the class. The strength of the managerial class is evidenced in the exceptional pragmatism and ideological flexibility of its members. However, the class finds itself deeply torn over several important issues, not least the issue of how great a role to assign to corporate capital.

The members of the managerial class are professionals with portfolios. The criteria for entry into the professions are the same criteria that dictate the terms of inclusion and exclusion from the managerial class. Professional positions are obtained on the basis of "merit." Thus, the managerial class conceives of itself as an open class; all those who display sufficient "merit" can be admitted as members.

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But who is most likely to demonstrate "merit"? The managerial class is disproportionately comprised of academic high achievers. Robert Reich claims that 80 to 85 percent of young people in the United States receive either virtually "no education" or "a poor one." But, says Reich, the remaining "15 to 20 percent. . .are being perfectly prepared for a lifetime of symbolic-analytic work."[20] Reich goes on to describe the nature of the education and the social background of these "fortunate young people":

> The formal education of the budding symbolic-analyst follows a common pattern. Some of these young people attend elite private schools, followed by the most selective universities and prestigious graduate schools; a majority spend childhood within high-quality suburban public schools where they are tracked through advanced courses in the company of other similarly fortunate symbolic-analytic offspring, and thence to good four-year colleges. But their experiences are similar: Their parents are interested and involved in their education. Their teachers and professors are attentive to their academic needs. They have access to state-of-the-art science laboratories, language laboratories, interactive computers and video systems in the classroom, and high-tech school libraries. Their classes are relatively small; their peers are intellectually stimulating. Their parents take them to museums and cultural events, expose them to foreign travel, and give them music lessons. At home are educational books, educational toys, educational videotapes, microscopes, telescopes, and personal computers replete with the latest educational software. Should the children fall behind in their studies, they are delivered to private tutors. Should they develop a physical ailment that impedes their learning, they immediately receive good medical care.[21]

While other countries, Japan and those in Europe for example, offer a higher quality of education to broader segments of their populations, according to Reich, "no other society prepares its most fortunate young people as well for lifetimes of creative problem-solving, identifying, and brokering" as the United States.[22] The phenomenon of caste—not in Myrdal's sense but in Cox's sense—in the selection of America's "symbolic-analytic" elite is plainly apparent.

Such a phenomenon was evident as early as the mid-1950s to Horace Mann Bond. Bond, curious about the social distributive effects of reliance upon standardized tests for identification of young people with talent, compared the National Merit Scholarship win-

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ners' reports of their fathers' occupations, as given in the National Merit Scholarship Corporation's 1956 report, with the total numbers of males in each of the occupational categories, thereby assessing how "productive" each occupational group was in generating winners of National Merit awards. The results of his comparison demonstrate that the winners of National Merit Scholarships tended to be young people whose fathers were highly-educated professionals:

> An American child whose father was a librarian had, in 1956, 1,120 times the chance to win a National Merit Scholarship than a child whose parent was a laborer had. The odds against a child whose father is in one of the farming occupations were 30–1 to win a National Merit Scholarship in competition with a child of one of the professional occupations. While 168,000 physicians produced twenty-six scholars, 972,300 carpenters produced seven; 516,300 machinists produced three; 289,140 plumbers produced two; and 1,376,910 truckers produced three.[23]

Because the National Merit Scholarship Corporation's report also indicated from which high school each of the winners came, Bond was able to conclude that *no* black children from segregated Southern high schools received the award.[24] Nor was there any evidence that there were black students from the South among the 4,000 finalists.[25] Bond believed that the National Merit Scholarship data pointed toward class immobility. Optimistic about prospects for mobilizing the educational system to enhance social mobility, Bond was hopeful that reforms of schooling would further broaden the base of persons who could be identified as "talented."

Charles Manski, in a study undertaken on behalf of the Democratic Study Center, found in 1992 that growth in college enrollment over the past decade has been concentrated among more affluent young people. Partitioning the population into five income levels, Manski found that the lowest quintile was the only group with a smaller proportion of its children in college at the time of the study than at the start of the 1980s. The proportion of low-income high school graduates attending four-year colleges remained stable at about 26 percent while the proportion of children from upper income families attending four-year colleges rose from 56 to 60 percent. The study suggests that the decline in enrollment among the poorest young people was due to reduced federal financial aid.[26]

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Presumably, if federal financial aid rose, college enrollment among the poor would also rise, and class mobility would be enhanced.

This perspective fails to recognize the fundamental rigidity of social stratification in American society. This rigidity was also beyond the view of the Myrdal team. If it were possible to have a completely nondiscriminatory society, the inequalities that are determined by the advantages that better educated, wealthier parents can bestow upon their children would be even more significant.[27] As Arthur Lewis observed:

> Despite all the talk of social mobility, the open door, and equality of opportunity, the main effect of schooling on class structure has been to retain middle-class jobs for middle-class children, since middle-class parents are better than working class parents at getting their children through schooling and past the usual tests.[28]

Horace Mann Bond based his optimism concerning class mobility on another body of data that he felt ran counter to the implications of the National Merit Scholarship data. Bond undertook his own investigation of the occupational standings of the fathers and paternal grandfathers of three hundred Black Americans who held doctoral degrees. He found that over 41 percent of the fathers held positions as professional and technical workers, disproportionately consisting of ministers and teachers, while about 19 percent of the grandfathers were professional and technical workers. Identification of grandfathers' occupations was difficult because most of the subjects' grandparents had been slaves; therefore the occupations listed were based on post-emancipation employment.[29] Characteristically optimistic, Bond said, "the rapid emergence of an intellectual elite among former slaves shows how quickly the American magic can work. . . ."[30]

Bond's view was limited to a highly select group of blacks whose experiences were exceptional. But the transmission of social status is familiar:

> A social and intellectual elite takes form, evolving in two generations from an apparently unstratified population—principally composed of slaves, with a small minority of scarcely more privileged free persons of color. In the relatively short span of two generations, the parental occupations of our holders of doctorates, listed in the de-

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cade 1910–1919, closely approximate the parental occupations of our National Merit Scholars, as reported in 1956.[31]

Bond uncovered an important pattern. With the expanded development and importance of the managerial class, class mobility has *declined* in the United States. There was, arguably, greater class mobility under nineteenth-century capitalism than there was in the mid-twentieth century during the rise of managerialism.

Myrdal, blind to this rigidity, spoke of a symmetrical ease with which society can switch from a vicious to a virtuous circle of race relations by a marginal improvement in white beliefs. No such symmetry exists. It is much easier to maintain a downward spiral than to initiate an upward spiral.

Still, the illusion of class mobility in the United States remains. It has been fostered, in part, by the mythology of white ethnic immigrant ascension. But, in general, white ethnic immigrant groups arriving at the turn of the century whose descendants have proven to be high-achievers were better educated and more skilled than groups whose descendants have not done as well.[32] For example, while Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century entered the United States in poverty, Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman have pointed out that "[t]he proportion of Jews who declared upon entry to the United States that they were laborers, farmers, or servants averaged less than 25 percent in 1900–1902 compared to 80–90 percent of the other immigrant groups." Today, Jewish Americans have the highest income among all white ethnic groups in the United States.[33]

The more recent successes of descendants of Asian immigrants displays a similar connection. In a 1987 article in *Time* magazine, psychologist Julian Stanley reported that of 292 preteens who scored high on the math portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, one-quarter were Asian-Americans. Seventy-one percent of their fathers and 21 percent of their mothers held doctorate or medical degrees, in contrast with 39 percent of the fathers and 10 percent of the mothers of non-Asians. The same article reports that a 1965 immigration law which eliminated US exclusionary quotas "brought a surge of largely middle-class Asian professionals—doctors, engineers and academics from Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, India, and Philippines—seeking economic opportunity."[34]

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Previous estimates of intergenerational income correlations suggested that there was negligible correlation, 0.2 or less, between fathers' and sons' incomes. But the most recent research indicates that the earlier estimates were biased downward by measurement error, unrepresentative samples, or both. The revised estimates show an intergenerational correlation between incomes of *at least* 0.4, reversing the prior assumption that there is a high degree of income mobility in the United States.[35]

Individual exceptions notwithstanding, in modern America increasingly ethnicity is destiny.[36] Income and occupational distribution intertwine with the more rigid patterns of intergenerational replication of class status. It is within this context that prospects for the underclass need to be understood.

The underclass is the most deprived and least utilized fraction of the working class. Disproportionately black and concentrated in communities beset by poverty, the American underclass is conceptually equivalent to Marx's "lumpen." Given the hypothesis that American society is characterized by declining class mobility, the notion of uplifting the underclass—indeed uplifting the working class generally—is an exercise in mystification on a par with Cox's characterization of *An American Dilemma* as a mystification of American race relations. The odds are high that the children and grandchildren of the members of the underclass will share their status.

In the mid-1980s, Arthur Lewis undertook a simple arithmetical exercise with respect to racial inequality. He asked how many above median earnings jobs would be required for blacks to achieve equality in median earnings with whites. Using 1980 data Lewis found that there was a deficit of two million above median earnings jobs for blacks. According to Lewis this was not a large number of jobs, only about 2 percent of the total number of jobs available in the US economy during that year.[37]

But Lewis never identified the source of the jobs. Would they be entirely new jobs, or would nonblack workers have to be displaced? How would the resistance of white labor to competition be handled in the latter case? Would they be public sector jobs, or would they be generated by the private sector? He also did not indicate how much more than the median the jobs would pay or which blacks with below median earnings would receive the jobs.

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The same questions can be raised about the notion of transforming the *class* status of the underclass by providing better jobs. The capacity to "uplift the poor" is dependent upon the degree of rigidity of the system of social stratification. In a rigid system of stratification all the slots must be filled, including the slots at the very bottom. The distribution of class status inherently takes on the qualities of a zero-sum game, particularly if class structure is viewed as largely predetermined and only slowly changing.

Which members of the managerial class are willing, at least temporarily, to trade places with members of the working class? How many members of the managerial class are willing to uncompromisingly support the diffusion of quality education, with more resources per capita going to the education of the children of the underclass?

The genesis of the black urban underclass bears further testimony to the powerful effects of caste in American society. Nicholas Lemann argues that the class origins of blacks in the deep South followed them on their migration to the Northern cities.[38] In a sense, their class status in the context of Southern plantation agriculture was replicated in the context of Northern industrial centers.

Breaking with the effects of caste cannot be accomplished without addressing the question of hierarchy in a managerial society, and the question of who is to be included and who is to be excluded. Race and ethnicity become critical markers, dictating relative group preparedness for participation in the age of science and technology.

While Black Americans constitute about 12 percent of the US population, they hold only 1.5 percent of the approximately 75,000 doctorates in science and engineering. Similarly, Native Americans constitute close to 1 percent of the US population but hold only 0.1 percent of all science and engineering doctorates. Hispanics constitute approximately 9 percent of the US population but hold only 1.7 percent of science and engineering doctorates. In contrast, whites constitute 75 percent of the US population and hold 88 percent of the science and engineering doctorates. And Asians, constituting only 3 percent of the population, hold close to 9 percent of the science and engineering doctorates.[39]

There is little promise for a change in these conditions. Between 1982 and 1992 the proportion of doctorates awarded to African

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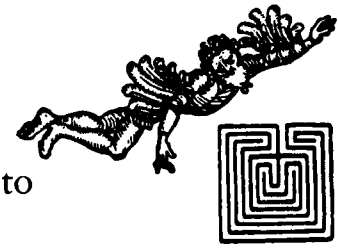

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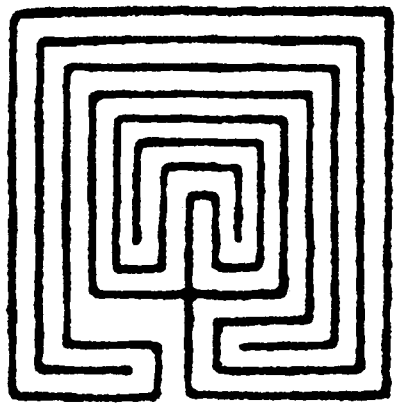

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Americans in all fields fell from 1,047 to 951, a 9 percent decline. For black males alone the decline was 20 percent.[40]

A similar pattern is evident with respect to professional/managerial employment. While 54 percent of men and 52 percent of women aged twenty-five to fifty-four of Russian (Jewish) ancestry held professional/managerial positions in 1990, the proportion for Black American men and women was only 14 percent and 20 percent respectively.[41] Thus, on the basis of race and ethnicity, "outcast" groups can be identified as groups whose members cannot be expected to play a major, or even a minor, role in the unwinding of the managerial age.

The most thoroughly excluded members of the "outcast" group, i.e., the black underclass, may find other policies besides spatial isolation and deprivation of adequate welfare support (as a precursor to workfare) directed toward them. While capitalism in its laissez-faire mode is ambivalent on the population question, the social managers possess a growing inclination to view population as something to be controlled and reduced. Under capitalism a growing population replenished the reserve of labor and potentially contributed to market expansion. This surplus population was necessary, simultaneously restraining the strength and demands of the employed fraction of the working class and guaranteeing that capital could quickly supply newly expanding sectors with workers without having to remove them from other sectors. But the reserve of labor, especially the least frequently employed "stagnant" element, was often undisciplined, prone to street crime, and lived in neighborhoods that were a tinderbox for social tensions. From that vantage point some ideologues for the bourgeois system could argue for population control to "fine-tune" the labor reserve.

Given the necessity of a reserve, capital as a whole maintained a mixed posture toward population control. Capitalism's spokesmen would be likely to advocate population control only if it could be targeted at those persons of the reserve who were least likely to be subjected to the discipline of the capitalist labor process and most likely to be socially disruptive. According to the managerial class, a working class is necessary because even the current advanced state of machine technology does not yet allow production to be conducted without human labor. But the momentum of technical change renders more and more labor superfluous. This has the starkest

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implications for those least likely to find employment, namely the underclass.

From the perspective of the managerial class, the "excess population" carried over from the decline of capitalism is truly extraneous. And the most extraneous will be the element at the very base of the working class, the black underclass. These are managerial society's most obvious "undesirables." Population control measures have been targeted at the black poor. Resources for family planning programs have been disproportionately funneled toward black communities with the intent of lowering black fertility. National evidence indicates that family planning programs have lowered the fertility of low-income black women.[42] Indeed, state funding for birth control services first occurred in the South in the early 1960s. Lincoln Pashute concluded his inquiry into patterns of introduction of birth control services at the state level in the United States by observing that "Southern society and its policies [were] motivated, at least in part, by the desire to reduce the fertility of blacks whether for racial reasons or because they believe blacks make welfare demands upon the state in excess of their contribution, or both together."[43]

In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area—an area with a 75–80 percent black population—the regional welfare caseload declined 9.5 percent between 1975 and 1978 according to Janice Outtz's study prepared for the Greater Washington Research Center. According to Outtz a major factor was the decrease in the size of the average welfare family from four persons in 1970 to three in 1977. A *Washington Post* reporter immediately speculated that the decrease was attributable to "the availability of publicly financed abortions under the Medicaid program that serves welfare recipients."[44] Indeed, by 1979, 13,611 induced abortions were performed on residents of the District of Columbia.[45]

Increased access to abortions for the black poor in the 1970s coincided with a decline in the real value of public assistance. In Washington, D.C. the cost of living rose 68 percent between 1970 and 1978, while public assistance payments increased by only 13 percent.[46] Nationwide, the real purchasing power of monthly AFDC plus food stamps for a family of four dropped 8 percent.

The 1970s featured the subtly genocidal twist of providing more resources to the black poor to limit their family size and less

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resources to support their already living children. The termination of public funds for abortions for Medicaid patients during Joseph Califano's tenure as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare was not accompanied by an attempt to raise the real value of government transfer payments. Indeed, journalist Ken Auletta expressed strong displeasure with the Califano decision due to "the 'incalculable costs' of making abortion harder to obtain. Among those costs: more future city criminals will be incubated, unwanted kids, entering the world without nurturing and self-esteem."[47] Auletta prefers to launch a preemptory strike before the children of the underclass are born. The Clinton administration is moving to reverse the Califano policy.

The involuntary sterilization of black women, especially welfare mothers, and the involuntary use of blacks as subjects of dangerous medical experiments have occurred frequently in the United States.[48] Dramatic manifestations of these trends already are evident among members of another outcast group: more than one-quarter of all Native American women of childbearing age have been sterilized.[49]

In this sense, then, the underclass need not be a permanent fixture in the social order, but its disappearance will not be due to actions intended to uplift it. Rather, it will be gradually eliminated through social managerial programs. But only if the American system of social stratification is allowed to continue without challenge, the challenge that Myrdal's famous report never provided.

ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal (with the assistance of Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose), *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 380.

[2]Ibid., 381.

[3]Ibid., 75. Also see Ibid., Appendix 3, especially 1066–1069.

[4]Ibid., 391.

[5]Ibid., 76.

[6]William Darity, Jr. (with Jeremiah P. Cotton and Herbert Hill), "Race and Inequality in the Managerial Age," in Wornie Reed, ed., *African-Americans: Essential Perspectives* (Westport, Conn: Auburn House, 1993), 35–57. To the extent that there was an increase in the numbers of the "black middle class" in the 1960s, it was largely due to the expansion of social welfare programs under the aegis of the

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Great Society. The growth in the "black middle class" is linked directly to their capacity to take professional, administrative, and technical positions in running public social welfare programs. See Michael K. Brown and Steven P. Erie, "Blacks and the Legacy of the Great Society: The Economic and Political Impact of Social Policy," *Public Policy* (Summer 1981): 308–309.

[7]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 391.

[8]Oliver Cox, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1959; originally published by Doubleday in 1948), 509–38.

[9]Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 208–24.

[10]See Barbara and John Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," in Pat Walker, ed., *Between Labor and Capital* (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1979); Nicos Poulantzas, "The New Petty Bourgeoisie," *The Insurgent Sociologist* (Summer 1979); Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of the Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); David Lebedoff, "The Dangerous Arrogance of the New Elite," *Esquire,* 29 August 1978; and Jean-Christophe Agnew, "A Touch of Class," *Democracy* (Spring 1983): 59–72.

[11]Lebedoff, "The Dangerous Arrogance of the New Elite," 20–21.

[12]Karl Marx, *Capital,* vol. 3 (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 317–75. In this connection, Reich's, *The Work of Nations,* 6, observation on the profitability and performance of American corporations over the course of the past quarter century is consistent with the relative decline of industrial capitalism in this country.

[13]See Rudolf Bahro, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: New Left Books, 1978). An explicit treatment of the bureaucratic elite under "actually existing socialism" as a "new class" with characteristics akin to what is described as the managerial elite came as early as the late 1950s; see Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of The Communist System* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1957). The classic statement of the emergence of the managerial class on an international scale is contained in James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution: What is Happening in the World Today* (New York: John Day Co., 1941). For a more complete development of the view that the end of capitalism need not mean the rise of the proletariat also see the discussions in William Darity, Jr., Ronald Johnson, and Edward Thompson, "The Political Economy of U.S. Energy and Equity Policy," in Hans Landsberg, ed., *High Energy Costs: Assessing the Burden* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1982), 170–219, and Erik Olin Wright, "Capitalism's Futures," *Socialist Review* (March/April 1983).

[14]Highly representative of the contemporary economist's impulse is Theodore W. Schultze, *Investing in People: The Economics of Population Quality* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1981).

[15]On corporate capital's attitude toward government see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1904), 376.

[16]Kathy Sawyer, "Uncle Sam's New Look: A Workforce in Transition From Clerks to Technocrats," *The Washington Post,* 4 August 1980, A7.

[17]Calculations performed by the author based upon data in US Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the US 1991* (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1991), 305, 329.

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[18]See Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," passim. Also see E. Richard Brown, *Rockefeller Medicine Men: Medicine and Capitalism in America* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1979) and Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957; originally published in 1918).

[19]In the 1980s government employment continued to grow, but by less than 1 percent per annum, while total employment grew at an average annual rate of 2 percent. In 1972 only 3.3 percent of all social workers were employed in the private sector, whereas by 1983 the proportion had risen to 12 percent. See Jacqueline Trescott, "The New Breed of People Who Help," *The Washington Post,* 27 November 1983, K1. A similar push was evident in the medical and health services field with the development and implementation of various proposals to "privatize" the delivery of such services. See Judith Feder et al., "Health," in Isabel Sawhill and John Palmer, eds., *The Reagan Experiment* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1982).

[20]Reich, *The Work of Nations,* 227.

[21]Ibid., 227–28.

[22]Ibid., 228.

[23]Horace Mann Bond, *The Search for Talent* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, 1959), 23.

[24]Ibid., 22.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Pat Ordovensky, "Poor Are Still Shut Out of College," *The USA Today,* 27 August 1992, D1.

[27]Christopher J. Ruhm, "When 'Equal Opportunity' Is Not Enough: Training Costs and Intergenerational Inequality," *Journal of Human Resources* 23 (2) (Spring 1988): 155–72.

[28]W. Arthur Lewis, *Racial Conflict and Economic Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 58.

[29]Bond, *The Search for Talent,* 28.

[30]Ibid., 52.

[31]Ibid., 31.

[32]William Darity, Jr., "What's Left of the Economic Theory of Discrimination," in Steven Shulman and William Darity, Jr., eds., *The Question of Discrimination: Racial Inequality in the U.S. Labor Market* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989). Also see Andrea Tyree, "Reshuffling the Social Deck: From Mass Migration to the Transformation of the American Ethnic Hierarchy," in J. R. Blau and Norman Goodman, eds., *Social Roles and Social Institutions: Essays in Honor of Rose Laub Coser* (Denver, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991). Tyree finds using data from the General Social Survey that "the current [economic] ranking of white ethnic groups is a positive function of hierarchical position at the turn of the century. . . ." Ibid., 213.

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[33]Calvin Goldscheider and Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 166. Stephen Steinberg also has reported on the skilled character of Eastern European Jewish immigrants that "gave them a decisive advantage over other immigrants. . . ." See Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1981), 101.

[34]Jennifer Hull, Jeannie Park, and James Willwerth, "The New Whiz Kids," *Time,* 31 August 1987, 42–51.

[35]See Gary A. Solon, "Intergenerational Income Mobility," *American Economic Review* 82 (3) (June 1992): 393–408 and David J. Zimmerman, "Regression Toward Mediocrity in Economic Stature," in Ibid., 409–29. Solon's and Zimmerman's results reverse the conclusions reached, for example, in Bradley Shiller, "Relative Earnings Mobility in the United States," *American Economic Review* 67 (5) (December 1977): 926–41. But even Shiller's study pointed to *less* mobility for black workers than white workers.

[36]See William Darity, Jr., David Guilkey, and William Winfrey, "Ethnicity, Race and Earnings," *Economics Letters* (forthcoming). For an examination of specific ethnic groups' social origins and their economic outcomes in the United States, see Darity "What's Left of the Economic Theory of Discrimination." For a comprehensive demonstration that Japanese immigrants had exceptional characteristics prior to entry into the United States, see Masao F. Suzuki, *Japanese American Economic Achievement, 1900–1942,* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Economics, Stanford University, December 1993.

[37]Lewis, *Racial Conflict and Economic Development.*

[38]Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 1–58.

[39]Robert C. Johnson, "Black Underrepresentation in Science and Technology," *Trotter Institute Review* (Winter/Spring 1991): 13–18.

[40]Frank James (Knight-Ridder News Service), "The Educating of America: Black Ph.D. Recipients—Prospective Faculty Members—Are On Decline," *The Durham Herald-Sun,* 13 February 1994, G6, G10.

[41]William Darity, Jr. and William Winfrey, "Interethnic Disparity Across Census Divisions, 1980–1990," paper prepared for the Housing and Urban Development conference on "Regional Growth and Community Development," Washington, D.C., 18 November 1993.

[42]John E. Anderson and Lisa G. Cope, "The Impact of Family Planning Program Activity on Fertility," *Family Planning Perspectives* 19 (July/August 1987): 152–57.

[43]Lincoln Pashute, "Economics Versus Racial Discrimination in the Provision of Birth Control Services in the United States" in Julian Simon, ed., *Research in Population Economics* 1 (1978): 189–96.

[44]Jack Eisen, "Welfare Families Said Hard-Hit in '70's," *The Washington Post,* 22 June 1980, B3.

[45]Government of the District of Columbia, "Induced Pregnancy Terminations (Abortions) in the District of Columbia: 1979," Statistical Note 41, November

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1980, 1 and Government of the District of Columbia, "Table A-Vital Statistics Summary Sheet: District of Columbia Residents, 1970–1978."

[46]Eisen, "Welfare Families Said Hard-Hit in '70's," B3.

[47]Nat Hentoff, "Conundrums and Choices: Jews and Abortion," *Washington Jewish Week,* October 1989, 14, 16.

[48]Thomas Shapiro, *Population Control Politics: Women, Sterilization, and Reproductive Choice* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1985).

[49]Brint Dillingham, "Sterilization of Native Americans," *American Indian Journal* 3 (July 1977): 16–19.

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The trend toward public control of the labor market is the great hope for the Negro at the present time. For the Negro, it is of paramount importance to make the most of it. Public authority is compelled to side with him, in one way or another. The objective of an educational campaign is to minimize prejudice—or, at least, to bring the conflict between prejudice and ideals out into the open and to force the white citizen to take his choice. The practical objective, in the economic sphere, is to break down the barriers against employment of Negroes, to open up new areas for the Negro worker: industrial, occupational and geographical.

Gunnar Myrdal

From *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*

Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944

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Doris Y. Wilkinson

Gender and Social Inequality: The Prevailing Significance of Race

In every society there are at least two groups of people, besides the Negroes, who are characterized by high social visibility expressed in physical appearance, dress, and patterns of behavior, and who have been "suppressed." We refer to women and children. Their present status, as well as their history and their problems in society, reveal striking similarities to those of the Negroes. . . .It will, therefore, give perspective to the Negro problem and prevent faulty interpretations to sketch some of the important similarities between the Negro problem and the women's problem.[1]

"A PARALLEL TO THE NEGRO PROBLEM"

IN THE PERCEPTIVE APPENDIX to *An American Dilemma,* Gunnar Myrdal clarified the meaning of "A Parallel to the Negro Problem." Concentrating on historical placement, status differentiation, and accompanying socially constructed attributes and behaviors, he interpreted what "marked" Americans of African ancestry in the United States. He observed that their position in the country's racially framed stratification system was analogous to that of free white women since both were under the control of a white male patriarchy. Taking into account the historically racialized social location and treatment of African slaves, without making

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gender distinctions among them, Myrdal noted that the ironic paternalistic conception of the slave as a family member "placed him beside women and children. The parallel goes, however, considerably deeper than being only a structural part in the defense ideology built up around slaves. Women [during the era of slavery] lacked a number of rights otherwise belonging to all free white citizens of full age."[2] Emphasizing the social position of white women, Myrdal recognized at the outset that:

> a tremendous difference existed both in actual status of these different groups and in the tone of sentiment in the respective relations. In the decades before the Civil War, in the conservative and increasingly antiquarian ideology of the American South, woman was elevated as an ornament and looked upon with pride, while the Negro slave became increasingly a chattel and a ward. . . .[Yet,] from the very beginning, the fight in America for the liberation of the Negro slaves was, therefore, closely coordinated with the fight for women's emancipation.[3]

This essay will address aspects of this situation as applicable to the present racialized political arena in which "black-white" relations remain significant and polarized. Despite the growing concern with diversity—with all that is implied by the contemporary multiculturalism movement—race remains a principal determinant of social organization, affecting every aspect of employment, educational opportunity, health, and justice.

THE PARADOXES OF RACE IN A GENDERED SOCIETY

In these last decades of the twentieth century, both intellectual discourse and academic scholarship are being greatly altered, indeed transformed, through the introduction of feminist perspectives, with a gender-balanced view providing new interpretations of the structure of postindustrial society.[4] New and reconstructed theoretical paradigms, deriving from poststructuralism, hermeneutics, and postmodernism, are modifying the ways in which contemporary political, economic, and social realities are viewed. Where the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences dwell increasingly on gender identities and emphasize the diverse conditions

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of oppression experienced by women, inequality in opportunity based on race tends to receive considerably less attention.

In academic discussions of inequality based on gender, considerable attention is given to women's traditional roles, the numerous workplace barriers that preclude upward mobility, and the disproportionately high male representation in many professional hierarchies, not least within the corporate world. Women are clearly underrepresented in the sciences; the "glass ceiling" restricts their movement into managerial positions in that domain and elsewhere. While there have been large changes in the labor force—in what women are now employed to do—and while housework is now seen, by some at least, as a form of employment, even if still uncompensated, there is increasing attention to problems created by sexual harassment in the workplace, conventional sexual stereotypes, and family violence, all adversely affecting the daily lives of women.[5]

In the contemporary, postmodern culture, gender is given a very considerable salience; social class and race are not thought to be equally important as determinants of inequality. Where individuality, perceptions of self-worth, and patterns of interaction are weighed so heavily, the social stratification based on racial distinctions and race-based animosities figures less prominently. Women, because of today's characteristic role stereotyping and the resulting gender imbalance in the work force, are reduced to subordinate places, and there is no denying this obvious fact.[6] Within academic and corporate settings, this inequality is constantly alluded to, and it is significant that such analysis is more commonly made by white female scholars and behavioral scientists than by those of African American descent or by their white male colleagues. In status ascription, identity, and group consciousness, gender description figures prominently. So long as race is not seen as the central element in defining the nation's opportunity structure, there can be no understanding of why the American race-based democracy continues to be confronted by the "dilemma" that Gunnar Myrdal so insightfully portrayed.

The salience of gendered differentiation in daily interaction and in the structure of society has contributed a meaningful dimension to intellectual dialogue and to scholarly descriptions and interpretations of status arrangements.[7] Examining the importance of gender

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has enabled a more functional explication of the beliefs and customs that frame our complex political culture. At the same time, translating the ingrained, systemic, and pervasive influence of race and racism in the country's institutions and ideologies permits greater understanding of the construction and perpetuation of all forms of inequality. Delineating race as the central element in opportunity and in status arrangements provides an explanation for the permanence of an "American dilemma" within a race-based democracy.[8]

Events of the early 1940s, in the years just before Myrdal's classic work, provide a context for examining the premises of this discussion. The examples which follow focus on the prominence of race and the relatively inconsequential impact of gender in the persistence of structural inequality. Neither gender nor class has been significantly deterministic in the historical patterns of racial exclusion, segregation, and discrimination experienced by African Americans.

THE STRUCTURE OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE 1940s

When Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish economist and social activist, wrote *An American Dilemma,* the United States was confronting a rapid transformation of its political culture and system of stratification. The Depression had ended and World War II was nearing its final phases. What was observed then about a democratic nation facing a moral paradox over its treatment of former African slaves remains salient today. It is, therefore, instructive to reexamine Myrdal's work.

In 1944, Myrdal, Richard Sterner, and Arnold Rose wrote that "segregation is now becoming so complete that the white Southerner practically never sees a Negro except as his servant and in other standardized and formalized caste situations." Both ecological separation and racial distance were entrenched in the fabric of the nation's beliefs, values, and social class hierarchy. All housing, private and public, was segregated by custom and by law. In fact, the Federal Housing Administration assumed "the policy of segregation used by private institutions, like banks, mortgage companies, building and loan associations, and real estate companies." Myrdal commented on this dilemma: "It is one thing when private tenants,

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property owners, and financial institutions maintain and extend patterns of racial segregation in housing. It is quite another matter when a federal agency chooses to side with the segregationists."[9] Thus, interracial separation, spatial isolation, and all forms of ecological discrimination were among the myriad of racial restrictions confronting "the American Negro" and the country as a whole. Yet, the ideological dissonance Myrdal perceived as a phenomenon of white America was not a part of the oppressive circumstances or the cognitive understanding of the descendants of African slaves. Similarly, gender segregation was obliterated as an issue with equivalent meaning to the spatial and economic segregation and political disenfranchisement of Americans of African descent.

As the decade of the 1940s unfolded, an estimated 13 million Americans of African heritage were residing in the United States, representing 9.8 percent of the population. Most of the foreign-born Americans of African descent were from the West Indies. Although the descendants of former slaves and free persons were living in an evolving industrial country founded on democratic principles, their historical conditions, daily interactions, and life chances were vastly different from those of Euro-American men and women. As Myrdal observed, blacks and whites never encountered each other except in subordinated-superiorized role relationships.

Furthermore, there were no parallels in the social position of white women, slaves, or free blacks in the class system, nor were there parallels in their health status, and the conditions of oppression endured. Demographic data for 1940 show that a wider gap existed in life expectancy with regard to race than to gender. For example, life expectancy for white females was approximately 66.6 years, 62.1 years for white males, 54.9 years for African American females, and 51.5 years for African American or nonwhite males.[10] These comparative statistics, at that time as today, were empirical indicators of a major consequence of structural inequality based principally on a single ascriptive variable. Within racial categories today, significant variations persist in life expectancy. Life expectancy remains unequal for African American women and men, and throughout the 1940s infant and maternal mortality rates were predictably higher for nonwhites, most of whom were African

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American, than for whites. Racial inequality, not gender, is the foundation of these dissimilarities in life chances.

In spite of the organization of racial segregation in the country a half century ago, race and gender were systemic in the distribution of employment, privileges, and forms of opportunity throughout the North and the South. Data on the representation of African American workers among various types of occupations in the United States by region in 1940 vividly reveal the differential occupations and unequal economic situation of black men and women vis-à-vis white men and women. A disproportionate number of African American women worked in the service sector. Over one-half of employed black males were in nonfarm labor with the majority in unskilled jobs, service work, or in machine operative positions. In addition, the weight of race and gender in unemployment figures was relatively constant; throughout the decade, the unemployment rate for white males remained less than that for African American males. A wide racial gap also existed for women—unemployment rates for white women were much lower than those for black women. This racially determined gender inequity characterized employment in Northern industrial cities, in the Midwest, and in the South, where vast disparities in employment rates and occupational statuses prevailed.[11]

In addition, housing discrimination was also normative and schools were separate and unequal. Race, not gender, was the principal determinant of this legislated inequality. Patterns of exclusion and isolation in the lives of African American women were the complete opposite of those encountered by Euro-American women. Black and white families lived in racially divided communities in all parts of the country; they were segregated by physical and socially constructed barriers. This racial distance occurred even when historical dwelling units and housing patterns dictated that they live on the same street. Myrdal felt that this ecological reality crystallized the "American dilemma."

Following the Civil War and throughout the mid-twentieth century, racial customs and laws were interconnected in denying voting privileges, housing, and educational opportunities to African American families. Economic class was not the main component in the definitions of status, benefits, or advantages at any time between 1940 and 1970. Virtually not since slavery have economic class and

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gender affected where Americans of African ancestry would live, work, attend school, or worship. As previously noted, the Federal Housing Administration assented to the deliberate exclusion of "the Negro" from federal housing and even mandated the adoption of restrictive covenants for new housing based solely on race.[12] In addition, the Federal Housing Administration did not require that builders sell to African Americans.

Residential separation remains today. It is reinforced by lending institutions as well as real estate companies, and it is based on traditional customs and racial preferences. Gender is not a factor in housing discrimination based on race. While the masses of ethnic families in the United States live in ecologically distinct neighborhoods and communities, only African Americans remain spatially isolated and practically restricted to low income or predominantly black areas. Because of the variability in the amenities that accrue to those in particular residential communities, the salience of race linked to class transcends gender in interpretations of this form of inequality.

The economic conditions and health outcomes for African Americans just prior to and immediately following World War II and the Korean War negated the notion of a quandary in the consciousness of Euro-Americans. Merging with institutionalized, federally supported, and racially-based preferential treatment, the system of justice also stood squarely against the descendants of African slaves. For them, gender was not a basis for the inequities encountered in the administration of justice. Specifically, the death penalty was applied with greater frequency to blacks than to whites convicted of capital crimes. In the 1990s, this tacitly approved practice of the differential allocation of fairness under the law has been relatively unchanged.[13] Any regional variations in police behavior and in judicial outcomes merely show the pervasiveness of a race-based political culture.

THE PRIMACY OF RACE IN A GENDERED SOCIAL ORDER

The primary sociodemographic forces underlying inequality in the United States and in many other parts of the world, especially South Africa and England, are race and class. In order to understand the interrelations among status arrangements, the nature of social ine-

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quality, and the dynamics of the culture, these two stratifying factors require explication. A racially framed economy creates nearly permanent disenfranchised and disempowered strata almost independently of the interactive effects of gender and class. Therefore, any discussion of gender and structural differentiation exclusive of race leaves a much greater void in our knowledge base and hence in our comprehension of racialized realities.

Today gender is recognized as a crucial variable in the mapping of life experiences. Nonetheless, it is understandable why sex and gender discrimination were not examined extensively at the time *An American Dilemma* was written. The changing status of women and the gendering of society had not progressed as critical aspects of the transformation of American social organization and culture. At the same time, sexism has prevailed as an ideological force that has affected our values, beliefs, politics, the economy, the health sector, and other institutions. Given our country's multifaceted heritage, race has always been a far more fundamental basis of placement and intergroup exchange than has gender. Since Myrdal's analysis, economic class has emerged as a highly complex multidimensional variable and is somewhat more difficult to extricate from its interdependency with race.[14]

A half century after *An American Dilemma* and the *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, racial division continues to produce unequal economic, occupational, residential, and health outcomes between whites and blacks, as documented in labor force participation rates and health statistics for African American and Euro-American women between 1890 and 1960. This period spanned unparalleled changes in the country's political economy from one of slave-driven agricultural production and eventually complete racial exclusion, or "Jim Crowism," to an industrial order permeated by slowly evolving quasi-integration.

With rapid industrial growth and the diversification of the society, structural inequality evolved along gender and racial lines. Non-gender specific placement characterized the employment of Americans of African descent. Their restricted occupational outlets gave rise to a "secondary labor market." The original source for this employment discrimination was slavery. Racism provided the ideological justification for restricting opportunities and stratifying labor on the basis of race.

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> The institution of slavery in the United States set apart the work and employment privileges of African American males and females from those of European heritage. . . .In the process of equalizing the positions of African American men and women, enslavement embedded in the organization of work a virtually permanent caste-like component up to the mid-twentieth century. By establishing and legally validating rigid separation between the races, the institution generated vastly disparate ranking in the class system. Thus, it was inevitable that the descendants of slaves would inherit this structural pattern.[15]

While political and economic inequities mirror sex differences and gender roles, and while these link with class placement in the framing of US culture, racial ascription is far more pervasive in its impact, extent, intensity, historical meaning, and durability. Reflecting on Myrdal's thinking, the issue of class position does raise perplexing questions. However, the United States is guided in its customs, status hierarchies, beliefs, and normative domain by class domination intertwined with the injurious ideologies of racism and sexism. Whenever race is a part of the mosaic, it outweighs all other potential influences.

RACIAL OPPRESSION IN THE 1990s AND BEYOND

The *Brown* decision of 1954 recast the structural paradoxes surrounding education in the United States. Following that historic decision, the latent puzzles and concealed passions of race began to surface. Gender identity and sexual orientation were not at the forefront of the African American quest. Their central preoccupations were with the elimination of housing discrimination and restrictive covenants, access to quality health care, walking the streets without fear of police or other group harassment, the right to serve on juries and to receive justice in the courts, being treated with respect and dignity, being able to work, having voting privileges, and having the chance to secure an education, including having quality schools for their children.

Regardless of socioeconomic status and gender identity, segregation, discrimination, and restricted access have delimited the life experiences of all African Americans since the founding of the country and throughout most of the twentieth century. As shifts in the social class structure began to occur in the 1960s, African

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Americans who were successful or educated were seen as the enemies of the lower classes and of all "politically correct thinking" blacks. The notion was also propagated that Jews were the enemies of blacks, even though they had helped to build schools, had supported the NAACP, had participated in other Civil Rights organizations, and had marched alongside them in their struggle for freedom and equal protection under the Constitution.

In this century, race is the foundation of inequality for African Americans in all phases of life. White men and women in any social stratum, regardless of education, skills, ideological convictions, ethnic affiliations, gender, or sexual orientation, are aware that American society favors them over all African Americans. An example involving a Southern university in the 1990s will clarify this point. In one nonacademic unit of the university, all of the supervisors, secretaries, and mid-level managers are white. Not one has a college degree. The "runners"—those who run back and forth across the campus to pick up the mail—are often black men with college degrees. In this unit, when a college educated African American female data entry clerk wanted to take some college classes, rules were passed stipulating that one could no longer take extensive breaks or enroll in more than one course. This attempt to prohibit a black female from continuing her education is an example of institutionalized racism. And yet, this practice is sanctioned at all levels of the division's administrative hierarchy.

Awareness of privilege associated with socially constructed status is a major dimension of group affiliation and shared behaviors. Independent of educational achievements and economic class, poor white men and women know that the entire social system treats them preferentially over blacks. Middle-class white males and females are aware that judges, lawyers, health professionals, Congress, legislators at local and state levels, and college and university administrators of predominantly white colleges and universities, among others, support and uphold their rights above all Americans of African descent. Being white in America, regardless of gender, means being supported over Black Americans in all actions by "the system." This "system," anchored in the nation's cultural matrix, is an interlocking directorate and hierarchy dominated and controlled by men of one race. Myrdal and his associates recognized this phenomenon.

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SUMMARY

Gender contributes significantly to social inequalities. However, the United States is racially organized and hence its class structure is racially designed. White racism, along with class oppression and sexism, pervades the boundaries of the culture. Throughout this country's history and ensuing political economy, the extensiveness and permanence of the ideology of racism has been sustained. Recently, African American heterosexual women have been targeted as being the carriers, perpetrators, and/or victims of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). This politically contrived racist stereotyping will inevitably affect the life chances, family functioning, employment options, and the entire future of African Americans. The direct link between race, not gender, and social inferiorization is evident in this politicization of a world-wide health crisis. The shift in categorization of a disease that was disproportionately concentrated among homosexual men to heterosexual black females negates all logic. This attempt to reconstruct the origins and victims of the current pandemic clearly demonstrates the profound impact of race over gender *and* class in the United States.

We live in a social system where race endures as a politically charged attribute and where racism is a paramount belief configuration that reinforces a particular form of status domination and economic oppression. The ideology of racism determines, legitimizes, and reinforces the interlocking character of the race-class-gender triad. Myrdal was too early in his interpretations and descriptions to grasp this fundamental reality.

ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 1073.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Doris Wilkinson, Maxine Baca Zinn, and Esther Chow, eds., "Race, Class and Gender," *Gender and Society* 6 (September 1992).

[5]Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *Race, Class and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study,* 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

[8]Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in Toni Cade, ed., *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: New American Library, 1970), 190. Jacquelyne Jackson, "A Critique of Lerner's Work on Black Women and Further Thoughts," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 21 (Winter 1975): 63–89. Deborah K. King, "Multiple Jeopardies, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 (1988): 42–72.

[9]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 349–50. James E. Blackwell, *The Black Community: Diversity and Unity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

[10]Peter M. Bergman and Mort N. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 486–93.

[11]Doris Wilkinson, "The Segmented Labor Market and African American Women from 1890–1960: A Social History Interpretation," *Race and Ethnic Relations* 6 (1991): 85–104.

[12]Blackwell, *The Black Community,* 151–52.

[13]Thomas J. Keil and Gennaro F. Vito, "Race and the Death Penalty in Kentucky Murder Trials: 1976–1991: A Study of Racial Bias as a Factor in Capital Sentencing," paper presented at the "Variations in Capital Punishment" panel, Academy of Criminal Justice Science, Chicago, Ill., 11 March 1994. Raymond Paternoster, "Prosecutorial Discretion in Requesting the Death Penalty: A Case of Victim-Based Racial Discrimination," *Law and Society Review* 18 (1984): 437–78. M. Dwayne Smith, "Patterns of Discrimination in Assessments of the Death Penalty: The Case of Louisiana," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 15 (1987): 279–86.

[14]William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

[15]Wilkinson, "The Segmented Labor Market and African American Women from 1890–1960," 88. See also Elizabeth Ross Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service in the United States," *Journal of Negro History* 8 (October 1928): 389–421.

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Antonio McDaniel

The Dynamic Racial Composition of the United States

A RACIALLY DIVIDED SOCIETY

IN REVISITING GUNNAR MYRDAL'S *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, it is appropriate to reconsider the underlying theoretical orientation of that work. Myrdal and his collaborators reduced the "Negro problem" to a problem of assimilation or amalgamation into white America. *An American Dilemma* presents the racial conflict in American society as a moral problem, a problem of the resistance to African amalgamation by European Americans.[1] Myrdal viewed the cultural and physical amalgamation of immigrants as the solution to their social isolation, and he equated the race problem with the immigrant problem. But Myrdal and his colleagues were not aware at the time they were writing of the dramatic changes in the immigrant population that were about to occur. They could not have foreseen the increase in migrants from Asia and Latin America.

Myrdal saw the antiamalgamation attitude of whites as the obstacle to African American assimilation. In *An American Dilemma* race is presented as a special case of ethnicity; the problems of African Americans are considered in the same context as the problems of immigrants from Europe.[2] This confounding of race and immigrant status, or ethnicity, in the study of race relations has its origins in the Chicago School's early, pre-1940s, study of urban conditions within the United States.

Myrdal presents the European American standard of behavior as that which African Americans and other immigrants should emulate. This view has its own built-in biases. For example, it suggests

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that the "Negro problem" would be solved if African Americans adopted standards of behavior set by European Americans. This view also dictates that the removal of barriers to assimilation would facilitate both an improvement in the behavior of African Americans and access for them to the fruits of modern democracy. In addition, it is thought that assimilation would eliminate the discrepancy between the ideal of American egalitarianism and the reality of racial discrimination. Thus, racism and discrimination are not problematic if assimilation is allowed.

According to Myrdal, a group's racial problems are caused by that group being unassimilable. Such an approach assumes that racial discrimination is a contradiction rather than an integral part of the American system of stratification, and it has led to a kind of economic reductionism in the study of race relations in the United States. Herman Hoetink was one of the first to criticize this aspect of *An American Dilemma* in his work *Caribbean Race Relations: A Study of Two Variants*[3]: "if, in other words, the Negro group were spread over the higher and the whites on the lower rungs in proportion to their numbers, and the socio-economic gap separating whites and Negroes were to disappear—the race problem would cease to be a problem."[4]

Hoetink argued that populations show a proclivity for racial group attachments. There is a tendency for individuals to consider the interests of their group to be more important than those of other groups. Sociologists generally maintain that racial identity arises as a result of invidious intergroup distinctions and competitions,[5] which result from individuals having a biosocial predisposition to consider members of their group to be more important than other people. Individuals seek to increase the position of their race at the expense of other races. When different populations come into contact, conflict will result. Recent research supports Hoetink's earlier formulation of the problem. Lawrence Bobo and James Kluegel suggest that in the United States "the strongest aspect of group self-interest seems to be a straightforward calculation by whites that members of their own group will not benefit."[6] Even if we are not prepared to view racial problems as natural for human populations, we should consider the role of race in group conflict. In a multiracial society, conflict between racial groups may not only be a result of the struggle over resources but may also be a struggle over stan-

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dards of appropriate behavior and the legacy of difference. In the United States, behavioral differences such as athletic ability and performance on intelligence tests have been connected to phenotypic differences. Race and behavior are thought to interact, thus racial classification is one of the ways that individuals are placed within the system of social stratification.

In generic terms, race refers to social relations among "distinct" peoples. Accordingly, a race may be defined as a group of people living competitively in a relationship of superordination or subordination with respect to some other group or groups of people within a state, country, or economic area. The degree to which individuals can be assimilated depends largely on whether they are ethnically or racially different. For example, European immigrants to the United States are ethnically classified as foreign if they are born abroad and have foreign-born parents. The descendants of these immigrants, starting with the third generation, lose their identity as foreigners and merge into the mainstream, native-born white population. For immigrants from Africa and Asia, however, separate racial categories have been maintained irrespective of how many generations have lived in the United States. In this sense, race is distinct from ethnicity. The United States has many ethnic groups, but it is race not ethnicity which characterizes the divisions within this society. Particularly important in these divisions are physical differences, especially skin color.

Africans did not come to America as Africans; they came as Akan, Yoruba, Ibo, and Wolof. Europeans did not come as Europeans; they came as Englishmen, Scots, Frenchmen, and Irishmen. Likewise, Asians do not come to the United States as Asians; they arrive as Chinese, Japanese, and Indians. And migrants from Latin America do not come to the United States as Hispanics or Latinos; they come as Mexicans and Cubans.

Race is generally thought of in historical terms. That is, a racial classification is usually applied based on the belief that different racial groups originate from different geographical locations which are thought to have given each group its dominant characteristics. From a sociological point of view, geographical locations are thought to have given each racial group its dominant cultural origins, the source of its ethos. Thus, although Europeans originate from a variety of nations and cultures, in the United States their whiteness

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is what identifies them. Likewise, the physical distinction of blackness, or Africanness, identifies the African American.

As a concept, race requires that two or more distinct races be in existence. Thus, racial groups are always part of a system of race. In a racial system, individuals are classified on the basis of culture and physical distinguishability. Although race may have a biological aspect, racial classification depends on social interaction.

"Race relations" refers to the contact between different racial groups. "Ethnic relations" is a special case of race relations. Like race relations, ethnic relations refers to the social interaction of two populations which are distinguishable on the basis of their physical appearance and culture. Although the contact between two distinct ethnic groups may initially be governed by race relations, given time and favorable social conditions the physical differences are given decreasing significance and the subordinate group's culture is assimilated into that of the superordinate group.

In the United States this process has been extremely important in the creation of the "white race." In the racial assimilation of an ethnic group, physical distinctions are overshadowed by the myth of cultural and historical similarities. Assimilation requires that the subordinate group recognize myths of historical similarities and accept the dominant group's culture and historical predisposition. The assimilation of the Irish in the United States is the classic example of this process.[7]

A similar exercise took place in regard to African immigrants to the United States. African slaves were in no position to perpetuate their own national/tribal identity, and they were forced by their social conditions within the Americas to accept their designation as blacks or Africans. However, unlike the Irish, the African population continues to be unassimilable within the United States. In fact, the unassimilability of the African-derived population continues to be a major element of racial classification within American society.

Symbols of social status are an independent factor in the creation of racial prejudice.[8] Every racial group has a complex of physical characteristics that are accepted by the group as its norm.[9] In the United States, skin color is the most salient racial characteristic. For example, the rejection of blackness by mainstream society is seen as a question of social power, and this rejection has had negative consequences for the African American population, especially those

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with darker skin.[10] The African phenotype, blackness, has a significant negative effect on the occupational status and income of African and Mexican Americans.[11]

THE DYNAMIC RACIAL COMPOSITION OF THE UNITED STATES

Changes in the racial composition of the United States result from a combination of differential fertility, differential mortality, and net immigration. In the United States all births, deaths, and migrations are racially classified. Thus, racial classification and immigration have had a direct impact on the social conception of race. Variations in fertility and mortality determine to a disproportionate degree the absolute size of past and future populations. The racial composition of the United States has been dominated by immigration from Europe, Asia, and Africa. Historically, the most distinguishing feature of the changing racial composition was the growth of the African and European populations and the decline of the American Indian population. Equally important, however, is the growth of the Asian and Hispanic populations from 1950 onwards. The sudden appearance of the Hispanic population is a result of that classification being introduced in contemporary debates about race and ethnic difference in the US Census Bureau. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to estimate the actual size of the Hispanic population for the period before 1950.[12]

Figure 1 shows the changing racial composition of the United States from 1810 to 2050. In 1810 the European population accounted for about 73 percent of the total population. By 1930 the European population accounted for more than 88 percent of the total. In 1990, however, the European population accounted for less than 80 percent of the total. The early rise of the European population resulted from extensive immigration between 1810 and 1930. The European immigrant population began to decline substantially following the Great Depression. The subsequent decline in the proportion held by the European population was in large part caused by the increased migration of Asians and Hispanics (particularly Mexicans).

The racial composition, past and current, of the US population has important implications for the future. The proportion of the population which is descendant from Europe has been declining

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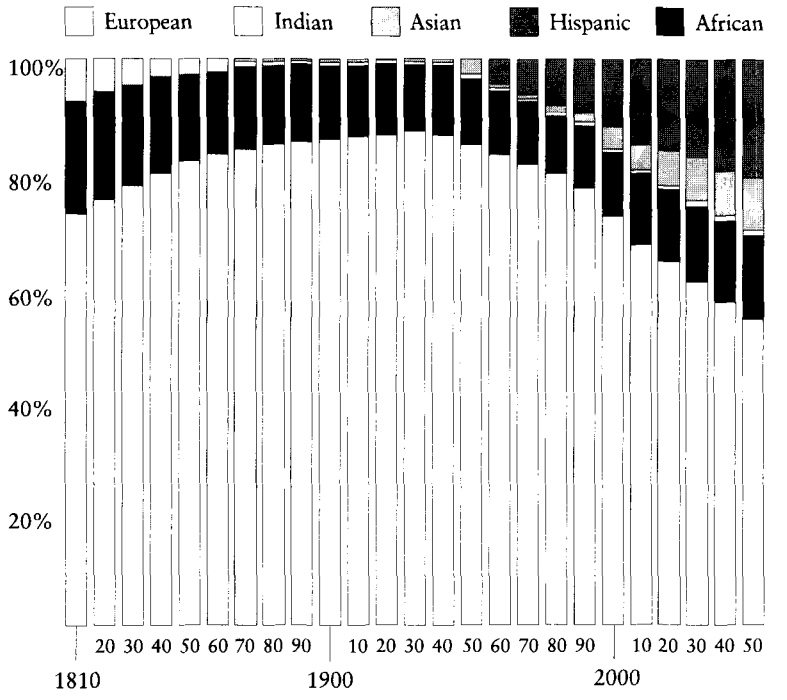
since the 1940s. This decline and the relative increases in the proportion of individuals who are of Asian, African, Hispanic, and American Indian descent have tremendous implications for what it will mean to be American.[13] Projections show that over the next sixty years the US population will grow more slowly than ever before and the racial distribution will change dramatically. Nonwhites and Hispanics are projected to dominate future population growth.

FIGURE 1. *Population Percentages by Race, 1810–2050*



Source: Appendix A.

Figure 2 shows the projected Hispanic, Asian, African, and American Indian populations up to the year 2050. The American Indian and African proportion of the population declined until the 1940s. (This decline is most notable for the American Indian population.) For the most part, these declines in relative size were the result of European migration and exceptionally high rates of mortality within

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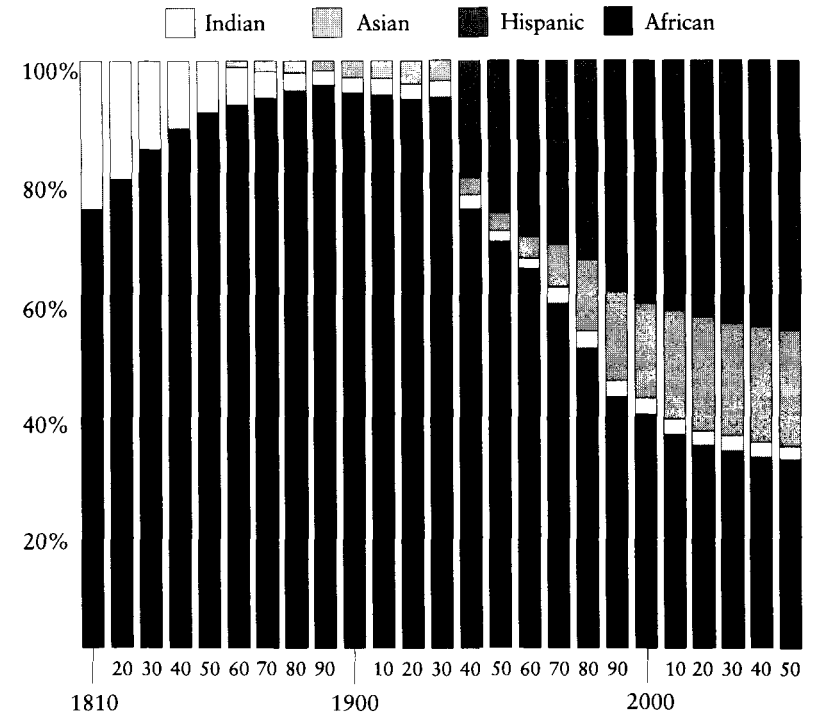
the American Indian and African populations. Another reason for the decline in the African population was the end of the legal slave trade in the United States in 1808. Around 1950 the Hispanic and Asian populations began to substantially increase their relative proportions of the population, with the Hispanic population experiencing the most growth.

FIGURE 2. Population Percentages by Race (minus European), 1810–2050



Source: Appendix A.

From the fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a massive transfer of populations from Africa and Europe to North America. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century this transfer continued for European derived populations. At the same time, the rate of immigration of Africans to North America declined substantially. The last fifty years have witnessed massive immigration to North America, par-

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ticularly the United States, from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The diversity within the so-called minority population is complicated by the problems of racial classification. How racial groups are classified has a tremendous impact on racial composition. The Hispanic and Asian populations continue to confound the dominant conception of race. Hispanics, Asians, and other immigrant groups are increasing in numbers and are not fitting into the traditional racial groups. In the 1990 Census, close to ten million people chose the "Other, Not Specified" race category.

If the current demographic trends and racial conceptions hold, minority groups will account for over 45 percent of the population. In addition, the contribution of the different racial groups to the overall population will be much more diverse than in the past. African Americans will comprise about 14 percent of the US population, with Hispanics accounting for about 22 percent of the total population.[14] However, racial classifications tend to change and population projections rarely hold for more than five or ten years.[15] As in the past, immigration will continue to have a profound impact on the racial composition of the United States.

Race, region of origin, and ethnicity have always been fundamental aspects of the selection of immigrants permitted to enter and settle in the United States. Following the termination of the slave trade, the US Congress attempted to regulate the racial and ethnic composition of the immigrant population as part of its national immigration policy.[16] The major policy objective seems to have been to maintain the racial composition of the population, or to preserve the white majority. This policy found its fullest expression in the national-origin system for the allocation of immigration quotas. It excluded certain populations from immigration on the basis of region of origin. For example, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917 excluded Asians of various nationalities from US citizenship. This exclusion did not end until 1952, when quotas for Asians were established on the basis of race or ancestry rather than birthplace. Another less drastic example was the selective policy used to curb Southern and East European immigration.

The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965 attempted to eliminate the racially preferential nature of immigration legislation. The stated purpose of the bill was "the elimination of the national-origins

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system as the basis for the selection of immigrants to the United States."[17] Before the Hart-Celler Immigration Act, the vast majority, over 80 percent, of legal immigrants to the United States were from Europe.[18] Since 1965, the proportion of immigrants from Europe has substantially declined, while the proportions from the Americas and Asia have substantially increased. In addition, the magnitude of undocumented immigration is significant, and most illegal immigrants come to the United States from Latin America.

TABLE 1. Percent of Population by Race and Nativity, 1960–1990

Race	1960	1970	1980	1990
African American				
Foreign-Born	1%	1%	3%	4%
Native-Born	99	99	97	96
Hispanic				
Foreign-Born	32	28	36	41
Native-Born	69	72	64	60
European American				
Foreign-Born	5	5	4	3
Native-Born	95	95	96	97
Asian				
Foreign-Born	32	37	61	63
Native-Born	68	63	39	37
American Indian				
Foreign-Born	1	2	2	1
Native-Born	99	98	98	99

Source: 1960–1990 Public Use Microdata files.

Immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean have different conceptions of racial identity.[19] For example, Mexicans have a racial continuum that runs from white to red, not from white to black as in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the Puerto Rican continuum from white to black is different from the bipolar conception in the United States. The Puerto Rican racial continuum may have more to do with culture than skin color.[20] Racial identification for Asians may not be based on a color continuum and may have

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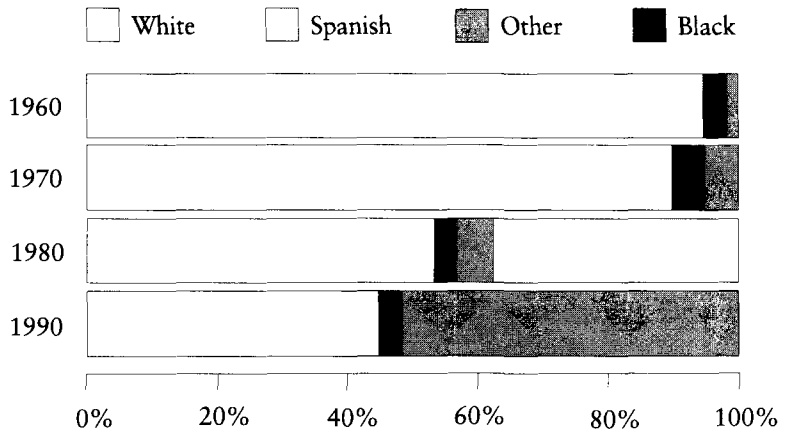
more to do with social and political exigencies.[21] For immigrants from the non-Hispanic Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, racial identification within the United States is defined by the history of the United States. For example, when black immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa enter the United States, they are treated as African Americans. European immigrants at the turn of the century also experienced a transformation in racial conception: they entered the United States as Poles, Greeks, or Irishmen but were assimilated into the white race. European ethnic groups, unlike Africans, Asians, American Indians, and Hispanics, employ their ethnic identity as an option rather than as an ascribed status.[22]

We may get a better picture of the racial classification of immigrants by examining the racial self-classification of the foreign-born. *Table 1* presents a cross-tabulation of race by birth status for the period from 1960 to 1990. As shown in *Table 1*, the majority of Asians and a large percentage of Hispanics are foreign-born.

FIGURE 3. Racial Classification of Latin American Immigrants, 1960–1990



Source: 1960–1990 Public Use Microdata files.

Most Asians classify themselves as Asian, but the racial classification of the Hispanic population is problematic. *Figure 3* shows the dynamic character of the racial classification of immigrants from Latin America. The two principal problems in racially classifying Hispanics arise from the large immigrant population and the differ-

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ent racial classifications within the countries of origin. Many Hispanics who immigrate to the United States would be classified as whites in their countries of origin. In fact, prior to 1980 most Hispanics classified themselves as racially white within the United States. In 1960 and 1970 over 95 percent of the immigrants from Latin America were classified as white. In 1980 the Census Bureau broadened its racial classifications to allow the Hispanic population to indicate their "Spanish" origin. In 1990, however, the Census Bureau eliminated the "Spanish" origin category, but the immigrants from Latin America continued to classify themselves as other than black or white.

THE LIMITS OF RACIAL ASSIMILATION

The classic model of assimilation is the melting pot.[23] This model assumes that immigrants arrive with a relative disadvantage vis-à-vis European Americans, that they are culturally distant and distinct, and that they lack communication and other skills. Thus, immigrants are initially clustered/segregated near the core of the city. However, the passage of time brings a withering of ethnic differences, and socioeconomic advancement translates into residential mobility/assimilation. This model assumes that the immigrant group will become like the majority population. In the United States the three principle forms of assimilation are residential integration, intermarriage, and the racial classification of children. In each of these types of assimilation the African American has been uniquely excluded.

African Americans are by far the most segregated racial group within the United States.[24] Compared with Asians and Hispanics, among whom higher levels of education and income have been associated with lower levels of segregation, African Americans show a tendency to be residentially isolated regardless of level of income, education, or occupation. Thus, residential segregation may be more related to racial stratification than to class inequality. Residential segregation is a reflection of the racial separation within the United States. The significance of this separation is rooted in how the members of a given society see themselves and what they want to see in the future.

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Ethnic and racial ancestry are attributes that parents transmit to their children within the constraints of socially prescribed rules. Thus, racial and ethnic classifications depend heavily on the family. There is a very high rate of intermarriage among European ethnic groups within the United States.[25] Thus, the children of such marriages could be classified as ethnically mixed, but they are racially white.[26]

The issue of racial heredity is complicated by the tendency for bipolar racial categorizing. Recent research suggests that in marriages between whites and African Americans the children are usually classified as African American.[27] Furthermore, Native Americans and Asians in mixed marriages with whites classify their children as white almost twice as often as do African American parents in mixed marriages.

The tendency for children of mixed races to be classified as white except when one parent is African American is further complicated by the patterns of interracial/interethnic marriage. Though the rates of intermarriage of African Americans and whites increased over the last two decades, African American/white intermarriage rates continue to be low compared to those of other nonwhite groups. For example, about 40 percent of Japanese and more than 50 percent of Native American women are interracially married whereas only about 1 percent of African American women and 3 percent of African American men are interracially married. Female outmarriage of African Americans is lower than for all other racial and ethnic groups.

American Indians and Asians are not only assimilating culturally, they are also assimilating physically via intermarriage and residential integration. African Americans, however, are not being assimilated culturally, residentially, or physically. Children from African American mixed marriages are classified as African American; African Americans are not intermarrying as often as other groups; and residential segregation may be increasing. Race continues to be a salient issue in American life.

CONCLUSION

Immigration has been and continues to be an important factor in the proportional differences in the racial composition of the United

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States. The American Indian population experienced a dramatic decline in size as a result of the formation of the United States of America. The African and European populations increased proportionally both because of this decline and because of their continued immigration. Immigration is still a central issue in race relations in the United States.

Racial conflict and competition have been hallmarks of American society from the moment the European settlers encountered established Native American populations in the fifteenth century. The reception of immigrants into the United States to a great degree reflects the interest of the racial groups that compose the population, especially the majority population. In the first half of the twentieth century, European immigrants to the northern United States "provided new supplies of cheap labor that competed with Negro labor for even the lower jobs such as domestics and common laborers."[28] Africans have historically felt that European immigrants displaced African workers and contributed to their poverty.[29] Recently, however, African Americans have begun to see their stance on immigration in racial/political terms. This new perspective is apparent in their views about the different treatment given Haitian versus Cuban immigrants to the United States. The older concern with displacement has not died, but it is becoming more politically motivated.

Following immigration, white ethnic groups intermarried and reduced their own racial classification to a social option. Given the recent rise in levels of intermarriage among Asians, Hispanics, and American Indians, the importance of homogamy as a factor in racial classification is being called into question. The majority of children produced by these interracial marriages are classified by their parents as whites, which reinforces the polarized definition of race. However, over half of the Hispanic population racially classified itself as "other" in the 1990 decennial census. This has led some scholars to argue that some Hispanics are racially intermediate between white and black.[30] Others have argued that groups like Puerto Ricans view race as culture regardless of the physical types within the culture.

Recently, both Asians and Hispanics have sought racial classifications specific to their own historical and cultural experiences. Only time will tell whether this is the beginning of a new system of

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racial classification within the United States. Still, the patterns of assimilation cannot be denied. Asians and Hispanics have successfully residentially integrated within European American communities.[31]

Racial classification is a unique form of social exclusion. "Majority and minority," "black and white," are formulations of the collective self and the collective other. These distinctions remain important because they facilitate social differentiation and exclusion. They reconfirm the social inequality of different populations within the society.

Racial isolation and antagonism have stimulated complacency and indifference to racism. Individual and group physical differences are often associated with beauty, culture, and intellectual ability. These associations are the hallmark of racial intolerance and conflict. The social rejection of blackness has helped maintain a social order in which opportunities and equality are offered to some and denied to others on the basis of race. Skin color continues to be a major factor in housing, education, and employment. By not confronting the problem of racial stratification socially and economically we prolong racial conflict.

The social exclusion and marginalization of the African American and American Indian populations have always been confounded by the low economic class position of their average member and the low social prestige ascribed to their racial status. In a multiracial society like the United States conflict results from a legacy of social difference.[32] The assimilationist tradition embodied in *An American Dilemma* stresses the idea that African Americans and other racial groups are below whites socially and morally because of certain values and behaviors. The phenotypic characteristics of different groups are viewed as surface manifestations of inner realities, such as values and behaviors. For African Americans these deviant values and behaviors are thought to have resulted from their endurance of social, political, and economic marginalization. The idea of race has been important in sustaining this view of social difference. Overcoming the shortcomings of this perspective requires a program of research and action which recognizes race as an integral part of American society and seeks to change the society. It is not simply a change in African American values and behaviors which is needed.

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White behaviors and values also require modification if we are to move beyond the trap of race relations.

Little is gained from a discussion of the racial makeup of the United States which diverts our attention from the issues of racial conflict and competion. To understand the nature of racial conflict in the United States it is necessary that we understand the demographic transformations which have accompanied the social construction of racial differences and racial acceptance. Race is more a relationship than a group classification. Racial classification places individuals within the system of racial conflict. The United States was born in the racial conflict among European and African immigrants and the American Indians, and today this tradition of conflict continues to live among the descendants of these and newer racial groups from Asia and Latin America.

APPENDIX A

Hispanics

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2000–2050: US Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992–2050,* Current Population Reports, P25–1092 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1992).

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1900–1910: Ibid., table 1.

1920–1990: Herbert Barringer, Robert Gardner, and Michael Levin, *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), 39, table 2.4A.

2000–2050: US Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992–2050,* Current Population Reports, P25–1092 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1992).

Asian Americans

1860–1990: Herbert Barringer, Robert Gardner, and Michael Levin, *Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993), 39, table 2.4A.

2000–2050: US Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992–2050,* Current Population Reports, P25–1092 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1992).

African Americans

1810–1870: Jack Eblen, "New Estimates of Vital Rates of the United States Black Population During the 19th Century," *Demography* (May 1974): table 2.

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1980–1990: Frederick W. Hollman, "U.S. Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1980 to 1991," US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, P25–1095 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1993); and Gregory Robinson, Bashir Ahmed, Prighwis Das Gupta, and Karen Woodrow, "Estimates of Population Coverage in the 1990 United States Census Based on Demographic Analysis," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* (September 1993): table 2.

2000–2050: US Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992–2050,* Current Population Reports, P25–1092 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1992).

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White

1810–1870: Donald J. Bogue, *Population of the United States: Historical Trends and Future Projections* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 39, table 2–3.

1880–1950: Ansley J. Coale and Melvin Zelnik, *New Estimates of Fertility and Population in the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 181–82, table 16–17.

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1980: Frederick W. Hollman, "U.S. Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1980 to 1991," US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, P25–1095 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1993), 26, table 1.

1990: Ibid., 4, table 1.

2000–2050: US Bureau of the Census, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992–2050,* Current Population Reports, P25–1092 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1992).

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[1]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962; originally published in 1944), chap. 3.

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[3]Herman Hoetink, *Caribbean Race Relations: A Study of Two Variants* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). Also see Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1948), chap. 23.

[4]Hoetink, *Caribbean Race Relations,* 88.

[5]See Milton Gorgon, *Human Nature, Class, and Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Also see Katherine O'Sullivan and William J. Wilson, "Race and Ethnicity," in Neil J. Smelser, ed., *Handbook of Sociology* (New York: Sage, 1988), 224–26, for an excellent summary of the arguments on this issue.

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[6]Lawrence Bobo and James R. Kluegel, "Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes?" *American Sociological Review* 58 (4) (1993): 443–64.

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[10]Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* 190–91. Also see Edward E. Telles and Edward Murguia, "Phenotypic Discrimination and Income Differences among Mexican Americans," *Social Science Quarterly* 71 (4) (1990): 682–96; Verna M. Keith and Cedric Herring, "Skin Tone and Stratification in the Black Community," *American Journal of Sociology* 97 (3) (1991): 760–78; and Clara E. Rodriguez and Hector Cordero-Guzman, "Placing Race in Context," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15 (4) (1992): 523–42.

[11]See Telles and Murguia, "Phenotypic Discrimination and Income Differences among Mexican Americans," and Keith and Herring, "Skin Tone and Stratification in the Black Community."

[12]The majority of the pre-1950 Hispanic population has been counted as white. Therefore, in *Figure 1* they are included in the pre-1950 European population. The common ancestral ties to Spain and Latin America do not imply an underlying cultural unity among peoples of Hispanic origin. See Frank D. Bean and Marta Tienda, *The Hispanic Population of the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988), chaps. 1 and 2, for an excellent discussion and summary of the issues surrounding the historical and contemporary problems of classifying the Hispanic population. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are distinct populations with discernable characteristics. Also see JoAnne Willette et al., "The Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Hispanic Population in the United States: 1950–1980," Report to the Department of Health and Human Services by Development Associates, Inc. and Population Reference Bureau, 18 January 1982.

[13]Future population depends on many factors which are not necessarily taken into account in population projections. The actual future population is never identical to the projected population. For a discussion of these projections and their limitations see Dennis A. Ahlburg, "The Census Bureau's New Projections of the U.S. Population," *Population and Development Review* 19 (1) (1993): 159–74.

[14]As *Figure 3* suggests, the projections presented in *Figures 1* and *2* may be deceptive. Many members of the Hispanic population feel that they are members of the white race, and a smaller number feel they are members of the black race. If these attitudes are built into our projections, then what the future may look like becomes very different.

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[16]Edward Prince Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 478–91.

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[20]Rodriguez and Cordero-Guzman, "Placing Race in Context."

[21]Yeu Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University, 1992), 31–41.

[22]See Michael Hoot and Joshua R. Goldstein, "How 4.5 Million Irish Immigrants Became 40 Million Irish Americans: Demographic Americans," *American Sociological Review* 59 (1) (1994): 64–82.

[23]K. Taeuber and A. F. Taeuber, *Negroes in Cities* (Chicago, Ill.: Aldine, 1964); Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City," in Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and R. D. McKenzie, eds., *The City* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1967; orginally published in 1925); and Robert E. Park, "The City," in Ibid.

[24]Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America* (New York: Russell Sage, 1987), 137–45; and Douglas S. Massey and Nancy C. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Interclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[25]Gillian Stevens and Linda Owens, "The Ethnic and Linguistic Backgrounds of U.S. Children," paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Southern Demographic Association, April 1990.

[26]Stanley Lieberson and Mary C. Waters, *From Many Strands: Ethnic and Racial Groups in Contemporary America* (New York: Sage, 1988), 258–60.

[27]Mary C. Waters, "The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity: Some Examples From Demography," Proceedings from the Albany Conference, "American Diversity: A Demographic Challenge for the Twenty-First Century," 15–16 April 1994.

[28]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 292.

[29]Lawrence H. Fuchs, "The Reactions of Black Americans to Immigration," in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 293–314. These fears may

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be unwarranted. Recent research finds little support for the notion that immigrants have had any significant negative impact on the employment situation of African Americans. See Robert D. Reischauer, "Immigration and the Underclass," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 501 (1989): 120–31. Yet, immigration may have a significant impact on the fiscal state of local governments. See Eric S. Rothman and Thomas J. Espenshade, "Fiscal Impacts of Immigration to the United States," *Population Index* 58 (3) (1992): 381–415. However, these conclusions themselves should be seen as tentative given the limitations of the available data and the questions addressed. This research has focused on wages, earnings, and unemployment, whereas the important impacts may be in labor force participation, working conditions, and internal migration.

[30]Rodriguez and Cordero-Guzman, "Placing Race in Context."

[31]See Farley and Allen, *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America,* 145, table 5.8.

[32]With African Americans comprising almost 50 percent of the prison population, the criminal justice system is a clear example of this conflict. The Los Angeles riot in April 1992 was multiracial and multiclass. More than anything, it reflected the sense of powerlessness that many nonwhite people feel. As Oliver C. Cox noted in 1948, four years after the publication of *An American Dilemma,* "There is here, then, an irreconcilable antithesis which must inevitably remain a constant source of social unrest. The 'lawlessness of judges' in deciding the law and the 'unlawful enforcement of the law' by policemen are pivotal in the racial system. The social anomaly is inherent." Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race,* 435.

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John Sibley Butler

Myrdal Revisited: The Negro in Business

IN THE YEARS SINCE GUNNAR MYRDAL published *An American Dilemma*, there have been many changes in the area of race relations. A massive Civil Rights movement gave people of African descent the basic constitutional rights that other Americans have enjoyed for centuries, and racial housing integration, though varying across the country, has been accomplished in some places, though not in any number of major cities. When Myrdal examined the data on the Negro in business, the professions, public service, and other white collar occupations, his interpretation was influenced by the theoretical frameworks of the day, but also by the structure of segregation and the overall reality of race relations in a racially segregated America. Despite all of the changes that have occurred since its publication, *An American Dilemma* stands today as a baseline for the analysis of race relations in America.

MYRDAL'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Myrdal distinguished the black wage earner from blacks employed in the professions and in other white collar occupations. This distinction was based on the total exclusion of black professionals from professional opportunities in the larger society, what Myrdal called the white middle or upper classes:

> The position of the Negro in business, professions, public service, and white collar jobs is far different from that of the Negro wage earner. As a wage earner the Negro is excluded from many trades; where he works, he is commonly held down to the status of laborer and is

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> excluded from skilled work. But there are always possibilities for him to enter these jobs, and he is always struggling to do so. In the occupations traditionally associated with upper- or middle-class status, the exclusion policy is usually much more complete and settled; this is because it is fortified by "social" considerations, as well as by economic ones.[1]

The distinction between black wage workers and black professionals is important because even under segregation, black workers might have aspired to obtain better jobs. Black professionals had no comparable opportunity to use their expertise, and, as Myrdal noted, the economic ramifications were great:

> The exclusion from the larger white economy means a severe restriction of the opportunities for Negroes to reach an upper- or middle-class status. It represents one of the main social mechanisms by which the Negro upper- and middle-classes are kept small. It also makes the occupational distribution in those classes skewed: while the Negro community gives places for a fair number of Negro preachers, teachers, and neighborhood storekeepers, it does not offer much chance for civil engineers and architects. The latter have to work in the white economy which does not want Negroes in such positions. The Negroes' representation among managers of industry,-if anything, is still smaller.[2]

This competitive disadvantage had both positive and negative results for black professionals. The black storekeeper could not compete with the white, and black doctors and lawyers could not compete with whites in those professions. But without segregation, Myrdal noted, the black middle class would not exist at all:

> This means that the entire Negro middle- and upper-class becomes caught in an ideological dilemma. On the one hand, they find that the caste wall blocks their economic and social opportunities. On the other hand, they have, at the same time, a vested interest in racial segregation since it gives them what opportunity they have.[3]

In 1930 Myrdal reported that there were 254,000 black workers in white collar and professional occupations. One out of fifteen black workers in nonagricultural jobs had a status higher than that of wage earner. Two out of every five nonagricultural white workers were in business, managerial, professional, and white collar jobs. Between 1910 and 1930 the number of black workers in these

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occupations increased. But since the corresponding increase of white workers was even greater, the relative position of blacks did not improve: in 1910, 1.8 percent of professional, managerial, and clerical workers were black; in 1930 this number had fallen to 1.7 percent.

Table 1 reports the data since the publication of *An American Dilemma* for blacks in white collar and higher occupations. Although the census categories have changed since 1930, *Table 1* provides a fairly accurate measurement of the changes.

TABLE 1. Black Workers in Business, Professional, and White Collar Occupations: 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980[a]

	Professional and Semi-Professional Workers			Proprietors, Managers, and Officials			Clerical, Sales, and Kindred Workers		
	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both	Males	Females	Both
Number of Black Workers									
1940	53,312	65,888	119,200	37,240	10,914	48,154	58,557	20,765	79,322
1950	75,090	104,280	179,370	71,130	25,950	97,080	116,760	80,850	197,610
1960	115,683	178,690	294,373	65,346	25,867	91,213	194,664	197,263	391,927
1970	244,655	388,960	633,615	121,949	48,007	169,956	430,120	825,514	1,255,634
1980[b]	546,271	770,809	1,317,080				712,342	1,639,737	2,352,079
Blacks as a Percentage of All Workers									
1940	2.80%	4.50%	3.60%	1.10%	2.60%	1.30%	1.30%	0.70%	1.10%
1950	2.50	5.30	3.60	1.70	3.80	2.00	4.40	1.80	2.80
1960	0.30	0.80	0.40	1.40	3.30	1.70	6.20	3.00	4.10
1970	3.50	8.30	5.40	2.30	4.40	2.60	6.10	6.50	6.30
1980	4.10	8.60	5.90				6.70	8.60	7.90

[a]Figures for 1940 are of employed persons. Figures for 1950–1980 are of the experienced civilian labor force.

[b]In the 1980 census, the professional and semi-professional workers were combined with proprietors, managers, and officials to form the category of Managerial and Professional Specialty Occupations. Clerical, sales, and kindred workers are considered to be in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Labor Force. Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population*, vol. 3, pt. 1; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1950*, vol. 4, *Special Reports*, pt. 1, chap. A, "Employment and Personal Characteristics"; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1960. Subject Reports. Occupational Characteristics;* U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1970. Subject Reports. Occupational Characteristics*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1980. Subject Reports. Occupation by Industry.*

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In 1930 the number of blacks (males and females) in professional occupations was 115,765.[4] In 1970 that number stood at 633,615. Although the absolute numbers increased significantly, the percentages have increased only slightly: blacks in the professional category numbered 3.9 percent in 1930 and rose only slightly to 5.4 percent by 1970.

The major increases in the number of black workers have come in the category of clerical, sales, and other work of that kind. In 1930, black males represented 1.3 percent and black females 0.07 percent of such workers. By 1980, these percentages had increased to 6.7 for males and 8.6 for females.

When Myrdal examined categories within different occupations, he found that blacks had slightly better chances of employment in the professions than in other occupations. In 1930 the number of black professional workers was higher (116,000) than that of clerical workers (83,000).[5] Among whites, by contrast, there were almost three clerks and such workers to every professional employee. Blacks were numerous among professional workers because of the segregated Southern school system and the segregated churches; teachers and ministers accounted for about two-thirds of all black professional workers.

THEORETICAL CHANGES IN THE STUDY OF ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS SINCE 1944

Two major frameworks continue to dominate our understanding of racial mobility today. The first, which has guided much of the research on racial mobility in America, involves assimilation. This model has held a dominant position since Myrdal, though it is increasingly questioned in certain quarters today. The second framework is grounded in the idea of the middleman, which presumes that the races will remain separate, that men and women will seek and find employ among their own.

At the time Myrdal wrote, social science literature was dominated by explanations for the poverty and inequality that seemed so characteristic of American society. Why are certain individuals and groups more successful than others? The "economic ladder" analogy, or assimilation model, was used to explain why certain ethnic groups (Jews, yesterday; Koreans, today) have made such great

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economic strides. Put simply, this argument holds that America has historically welcomed those ethnic groups who, despite their humble beginnings, were able to work their way into the "middle class."

During the time of segregation, and again in more recent years, this paradigm was prescribed as a model for black success. Blacks are thought of as just another immigrant group. As with European or Asian ethnic groups, emphasis is placed on the importance of blacks moving to major industrial centers, where they are expected to work hard, thereby gaining access to "middle-class" status. Certainly, some blacks have managed to achieve economic success through this strategy.

Although the "economic ladder" paradigm is still dominant in the minds of most Americans, new research on the relationship between self-help and successful economic adjustment is improving our understanding of the process.[6] The prevalent theory coming out of this research suggests that these possibilities are universal, applicable to all groups regardless of ethnicity or race.

One of the more interesting findings of research on ethnic America is that certain groups have achieved considerably greater economic success than others. For example, research has consistently shown that Japanese Americans have the highest income of any ethnic group in America today. While some researchers refer to this as the "miracle success story," it is no miracle at all. The Japanese have proven remarkably adept at adjusting their self-help capacities to American society. Other groups who adjusted in the manner of the Japanese, emphasizing business enterprise and institution building, have exhibited the same kind of success. The Japanese experience in the United States is starkly different from that of the Irish or the Italians who adjusted by joining America's massive labor force. When unions were broken up or neutralized, many Italian and Irish neighborhoods were thrown into economic turmoil. The independent, self-reliant Japanese by and large escaped a similar fate.

In a major research effort entitled *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity,* Edna Bonacich and John Modell show how, in the face of discrimination and racist ideology, the Japanese adjusted to America.[7] Arriving between 1899 and 1907, they first worked as farm laborers and domestic servants. By 1909 there were at least 3,500 Japanese-operated enterprises in the Western states. The great majority were service-oriented enterprises: boardinghouses,

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barbershops, poolrooms, tailor and dye shops, shoe repair stores, and laundries. The same historical pattern can be detected among Cuban Americans[8] and East European Jews.[9] Similar adjustment patterns are beginning to appear today among Haitians and Koreans.[10] These groups develop ethnic enclaves where residential homes and business enterprises exist side by side, and they place great emphasis on education. When their children enter the labor market, they often enter as professionals, entrepreneurial by nature. So, unlike the factory worker, they do not depend directly on the larger society for their economic stability. They are less likely to be so immediately and adversely affected by the ups and downs of the economy.

Groups in the Japanese self-help tradition are known for their ethnic solidarity. Community organizations teach the children to appreciate their culture, to understand the concept of self-help. This preoccupation with self-help and economic stability often alienates elements in the larger society. For example, anti-Semitism, some say, is in some measure a product of both the refusal of Jews to give up their identity and assimilate into the larger society *and* their achieving conspicuous economic prosperity. This is also true of the anti-Japanese sentiment that developed on the West Coast prior to World War II, and it is becoming true of the Vietnamese population in America today.

Did comparable success occur among African Americans who at the turn of the century adjusted to America by self-help, emphasizing the importance of business enterprise?[11] Did their offspring become professionals in the same manner? The answer to both questions is a resounding "yes!" Put another way, there is really no difference between African Americans whose parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents adjusted to America by self-help and the offspring of other self-help ethnic groups. This statement holds despite the historical presence of racism and discrimination.

Before the Civil War many free blacks made their livings as owners of small shops. In the late 1700s, for example, the city of Philadelphia was a community filled with both small and large African American businesses. Baltimore, very early, became a commercial center, important for its African American enterprises. In Cincinnati, African Americans owned engineering firms and brick factories, but also other small businesses. African Americans in

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New York were very active in business between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, owning some of the best restaurants on Wall Street. They were also known for their expertise in tailoring. Free blacks in Southern cities developed superior service enterprises (such as catering), which gave them virtual monopolies in these fields.

Like other groups that adjusted to America in this way, these African Americans had a strong sense of the importance of education, developing schools and encouraging education for their children as early as the 1830s. When W. E. B. Du Bois was doing research for his book, *The Philadelphia Negro,*[12] he specifically noted an "upper-class" group among blacks, doubtless the descendants of the early entrepreneurs.

After the Civil War, when millions of African Americans were "freed" from slavery, the major question was how this new group of citizens would adjust to American society. The celebrated debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois over which course to follow suggests something of the intensity of the conflict. Although Washington is generally identified as the major proponent of the development of business enterprise, he was, in fact, simply adhering to traditions already established by free African Americans prior to the Civil War. Washington's Negro Business League, started at the turn of the century, was a natural extension of pre-Civil War African American organizations prevalent in communities geared toward enterprise. Because of his speech at the Atlanta Exposition, in which he struck a deal encouraging whites to support the development of African American enterprise in return for a promise by blacks not to demand additional Civil Rights, Washington is considered by many to have been an enemy of Civil Rights, compromising those rights for white support of business enterprise. Arguing that blacks ought to concentrate on industrial education rather than higher education, he is generally contrasted with Du Bois who, while recognizing the importance of business enterprise—indeed Washington adopted many of Du Bois' ideas on economic development—has been portrayed by historians as a guardian of Civil Rights and Washington's major nemesis.

There is no need to debate again the rival ideologies of Washington and Du Bois. It is a fact that following the Civil War African Americans adopted different strategies in their efforts to adjust to American society. One, which accepted the realities of racism and

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discrimination, concentrated on the development of business enterprises. These differed from a number that existed before the Civil War because "Jim Crow" laws in the South restricted them to black communities. A second strategy consisted of joining the American workforce, very much in the tradition of European ethnic groups. Working in the larger workforce meant competing for a job in the industrial North or working as servants and domestics both in the North and the South. Those who succeeded in rising above the poverty level—who concentrated on self-help, institution building, and entrepreneurship—developed in ways common to certain ethnic groups.

Descendants of the African American self-help group trace their rise from poverty to the small enterprises developed in the African American community. Put simply, their success was "homegrown." Atlanta, Chicago, and Durham remain vital black business enclaves because of the continued economic and social momentum provided by turn-of-the-century successes in areas as different as insurance, banking, and publishing.

Like the European ethnic groups that accepted to work in mills and factories, the African Americans who labored in such environments did not develop the same kinds of attitudes toward self-help and education as their more entrepreneurial brethren. Their offspring were not as well prepared academically as those who adjusted to American society by self-help. Indeed, this group only began to attend college in "large" numbers in the 1960s, and they owed their educational "success" more to changes in society than to the dynamics of change within the black community.

In his chapter on "middle-class blacks" Myrdal was describing a variation of a middleman group within Black America which responded to segregation by creating business enterprises and institutions within their own communities.[13] As I noted:

> They. . .have been called the black bourgeoisie, black Brahmans, black elite, and the black upper-class. Whatever they are called, their adjustments to America bears a striking resemblance to middleman minorities throughout history. We formally define the Afro-American middleman group as consisting of those individuals who were entrepreneurs and professionals of the old segregated economy. Both of these groups, significantly, were service-oriented. Entrepreneurs, of course, refer to those who started business enterprises, including

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the owners of small independent farms. Professionals consisted of doctors, teachers, professors, ministers, and lawyers.[14]

Theoretical changes since Myrdal have shed new light on the importance of excluded groups developing self-contained communities for the development of a business community and a professional class. Indeed, immigrant groups such as the Vietnamese and the Koreans have created such segregated enclaves in order to achieve success. Strong consideration must be given to these kinds of changes, which suggest the importance of middleman groups.

BLACKS IN BUSINESS

Myrdal's analysis of blacks in business looks closely at those enterprises that blacks controlled prior to the turn of the eighteenth century, and how they lost control of them. This was a theme of interest even before Myrdal. In a paper read before the American Historical Society in 1913, Henry M. Minton analyzed the early history of black enterprise in Philadelphia with a concentration on those that had been lost. At that time, black enterprises were located throughout the city, serving both black and white clients.[15] This situation, detailed in all accounts of black business prior to the Civil War,[16] puts black business people in the tradition of middleman groups around the world. Because Myrdal did not consider the relationship between oppressed groups and business activity, he failed to fully explore the patterns of the data that he analyzed. Myrdal, writing within the theoretical frameworks of his day, imagined that the concentration of capital was all-important. According to this theory, the greater the development of the capitalist economic system becomes, the less important are the individual entrepreneurs. This basic idea, with its roots in Karl Marx's *Capital*,[17] takes for granted that small enterprises will not be able to compete with large firms that can accumulate capital more easily. While the "entrepreneurial type" would evolve, it would be insignificant in the overall structure of capitalist society.

Joseph Schumpeter also believed that entrepreneurship would decline as the process of innovation was increasingly taken over by large firms.[18] The concentration of capital in such firms would allow them to innovate, thereby dooming the small entrepreneurs.[19]

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In writing about "The Negro in Business," Myrdal noted the decline in black entrepreneurship: "the proportion of Negroes among all retail dealers was, if anything, smaller in 1930 than in 1910."[20] A comparable decline in entrepreneurship was characteristic of the country as a whole. Using sales as an index of the decline, he found that between 1929 and 1939 retail trade in the United States declined by 13 percent. For black enterprises, retail trade declined by 28 percent.

Since Myrdal, we have recognized that small-scale entrepreneurship is the avenue for upward mobility for many immigrant ethnic groups. Myrdal, in his concern to demonstrate how other groups had outperformed blacks, did not take into account the disadvantages blacks lived under.

> Particularly interesting is the great number of stores and restaurants operated by Chinese and Japanese. In 1929 they owned one-and-a-half times as many stores, restaurants, and eating places per 1,000 population as other residents of the United States. Negroes, on the other hand, operated but one-sixth of the number of such establishments as would correspond to their proportion in the population.[21]

While Japanese and Chinese enterprises were able to find their customers throughout the city, blacks in the South were forced to do business within their own communities because of the post-Civil War segregation laws. In the North, other kinds of constraints existed; one had to go back to the period before the Civil War to find blacks operating relatively freely in certain regions and cities. If, as Myrdal noted, many black neighborhoods were dominated by white businesses, he never fully explained why this was so.

> Negro areas. . .have a great number of stores and restaurants catering exclusively, or almost exclusively, to Negroes but operated by Jews, Greeks, Italians, and other whites. Sometimes this may be a matter of tradition, since it was only a few decades ago that many of the principal Negro neighborhoods in the North had entirely or predominantly white residents.[22]

Research has shown that even when Northern cities boasted black business districts, the business people generally rented from ethnic groups that had vacated the district.[23] Only in the South did blacks own the land on which their enterprises were built. Myrdal's data on the number of black entrepreneurs and white collar workers in

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selected trade and service industries for the years 1910 and 1930 show that the two largest categories are in wholesale and retail industries; they reflect the reality of segregation.

TABLE 2. Number of Black and White Entrepreneurs and White Collar Workers in Selected Trade and Service Industries: 1980

Industry and Occupation	White	Black
Banking:		
Managerial and Professional	619,538	187,938
Self-Employed	977	8
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	1,253,429	140,524
Self-Employed	21	0
Insurance:		
Managerial and Professional	303,139	15,796
Self-Employed	4,436	112
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	1,365,483	123,696
Self-Employed	451	5
Other Finance and Real Estate:		
Managerial and Professional	339,588	19,403
Self-Employed	11,143	205
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	1,043,046	40,930
Self-Employed	4,924	48
Wholesale Trade:		
Managerial and Professional	704,820	15,137
Self-Employed	23,864	396
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	1,856,299	76,716
Self-Employed	38,406	830
Retail Trade:		
Managerial and Professional	1,801,070	76,922
Self-Employed	187,399	6,996
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	6,670,705	425,206
Self-Employed	356,871	11,572
Hospitality (hotels):		
Managerial and Professional	147,303	6,256
Self-Employed	27,937	364
Technical, Sales, and Administrative Support	144,695	12,131
Self-Employed	335	7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1980. Subject Reports. Occupation by Industry.*

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It is important to consider what has happened since. *Table 2* shows self-employment figures for 1980. The largest category is retail trade; the second largest, wholesale trade. The continuity between Myrdal's findings and more recent data is striking. However, the continuity holds only for the middleman-like categories.

In 1980 the number of blacks employed in hotels, boardinghouses, and the like was significantly lower than in 1930. This reflects not only the decline of segregation, but also the decline of mom-and-pop boarding establishments.

Table 3 presents data for self-employment in agricultural and nonagricultural industries for blacks and whites. Starting in 1974, black self-employment in nonagricultural industries showed a steady increase until 1992. This was also true for the white self-employed in this category. During the same period, both black and white self-employment in the agricultural industry have gone down. However, black self-employment in agriculture increased between 1984 and 1992, which was not the case for whites. For neither group is it a chief source of employment today.

TABLE 3. Number of Black and White Self-Employed, Agricultural and Nonagricultural Industries: 1974, 1980, 1984, 1992

	Agricultural Industries		Nonagricultural Industries	
Year	White	Black	White	Black
1974	1,674,000	61,000	5,340,000	259,000
1980	1,578,000	36,000	6,538,000	306,000
1984	1,491,000	29,000	7,245,000	336,000
1992	1,337,000	39,000	7,878,000	415,000

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey* as published in the *Handbook of Labor Statistics and Annual Updates.*

Historically, black enterprises, in the tradition of other middleman groups, were more likely to be in the category of service enterprises. But recent trends show a growing diversity among black enterprises. Today, the corporate headquarters of the nation's largest black-owned corporations are located in urban areas. The growth in corporate administration in central city business districts has created a need for advertising, computer, accounting, legal, secretarial, and maintenance business services. Employment in these

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kinds of black firms grew by 224 percent between 1972 and 1987; the number of firms increased by nearly five times; and gross receipts grew by 700 percent.[24]

Perhaps the most significant change since the Myrdal report was the legislation coming out from the Civil Rights movement designed to ensure the development of black enterprise. In 1967 the Small Business Administration Section 8(a) program was created. Under this act, the Small Business Administration is authorized to contract with federal agencies on behalf of small and disadvantaged enterprises. Contracts processed through Section 8(a) increased from $8.9 million in 1969 to $2.7 billion in 1985. The Civil Rights movement was also instrumental in creating the 1977 Public Works Employment Act, which supplements the Section 8(a) program, requiring all general contractors bidding for public works projects to allocate at least 10 percent of their contracts to minority subcontractors.

Unlike early black enterprises, these are dependent on the government, and are therefore at the mercy of a changing political climate. During the 1980s, for example, the fundamental consent of set-aside assistant programs was called into question. In 1989, the Supreme Court ruled in *City of Richmond* v. *Croson* that the city of Richmond, Virginia did not have to set aside 30 percent of each public construction contract for minority enterprises.

This decision has had a strong negative effect on minority enterprises in Richmond and elsewhere. In July of 1987, when a lower court first ruled against set-aside programs, 40 percent of the city's total construction dollars went for products and services provided by minority-owned construction firms. After the Supreme Court decision, the minority businesses' share of contracts fell to 15 percent, dropping to less than 3 percent by the end of 1988. In Tampa, Florida the number of contracts given to black-owned enterprises decreased 99 percent during the same time period.[25]

Although many black enterprises are "back on main street," the geographic concentration of firms is highly correlated with large concentrations of blacks. In 1987, California had the highest number of black enterprises with gross receipts of $2.4 billion. New York was second, with 36,289 firms and gross receipts of $1.9 billion. Washington, D.C. had the largest share of enterprises owned by blacks, with 28.3 percent of the firms and 6.3 percent of the

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gross receipts. Black enterprises had the smallest share of business in Montana, with 0.1 percent of the firms and gross receipts.[26]

Myrdal noted that in 1939 there were 30,000 black enterprises, with total sales of a little more than $71,000,000, less than two-tenths of 1 percent of the national total. While the number of black enterprises has increased significantly since that time, compared to business enterprises in general, the number is still very small. Indeed, minority enterprise taken all together represents only about 5.7 percent of the total in America, with gross receipts of no more than 3 percent.

At one time the number of ethnic and racial enterprises was a measure of the viability of such businesses. Recent research shows that they are also important for the impact they have on the education of children and the values they create. Put another way, they are the organizations that keep a group from falling to the bottom of the economic ladder. This, of course, is one of the central themes of research on middleman minorities and the theory of ethnic enclaves.[27] Ethnic enterprises may be an unimportant blip on the economic scene, but they create opportunities for excluded racial and ethnic groups. Consider the following, which relates to the Cuban experience in South Florida:

> The Cubans are just another in the long line of immigrant swarms on the ever-changing American frontier, and their upsurge differs only in speed and number from any other in the continuing saga of American revival. Vietnamese, Central Americans, Lebanese, and even the much abused Haitians are making similar breakthroughs. . . .It has always been immigrants who have revitalized America's faith.[28]

For the last fifteen years *Black Enterprise* has published a list of the top one hundred African American businesses. From a historical perspective, the magazine is a re-creation of the positive aspects of enterprise prevalent in the writings of the "Tuskegee Machine,"[29] which Booker T. Washington headed. Indeed, it was the Washington "Machine" that encouraged many of the enterprises that existed when Myrdal was writing.

Taking as an example the top one hundred industrial/service companies in 1987, it must be noted that a good number of the enterprises are very new. Forty-seven percent were founded in the 1970s; 21 percent in the 1980s; 16 percent in the 1960s; 5 percent

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in the 1950s; and 2 percent in the 1940s. The three oldest companies in the top ten, Johnson Publishing (1942), Motown Industries (1958), and Soft Sheen Products (1964), originally developed products unique to the African American community. These are all companies which survived legal segregation.

Perhaps the greatest change since Myrdal is that there are now numerous black enterprises which serve the entire community, black and white. And, there is a new and greater emphasis on the importance of business education. As noted in a recent issue of *Black Enterprise,* "the next generation of. . .CEOs are bright, ambitious, well-educated and well-trained. Their challenge: to transform the family business into a diversified professionally managed enterprise."[30]

Thomas Boston has examined the base of what he calls the new bourgeoisie, or the new business class. His research confirms the changing character of black enterprises. Concentrating on the city of Atlanta, he found that

> traditional black-owned enterprises, especially those in retail and personal service industries, are rapidly declining. They are being replaced by a new generation of. . .businesses that emerged during the early 1980's. These new enterprises differ by the ethnic diversity of their clientele, the skill and experience of their owners, their location, industry concentration, and financial performance.[31]

Boston's work is significant because it shows that the major data source used to analyze black enterprises, the *Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises,* has important flaws. Because it only surveys small enterprises, it leads to misinterpretations of the performance of black firms, including the number of people they employ.

> [T]he really surprising revelation is that 325 firms generated 3,250 jobs. Yet the data [*Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises*] indicates that total employment in all 11,804 firms in the Atlanta Metropolitan area is only 6,828. This means that either the 325 firms in our data set account for one half of all jobs generated by black-owned firms, or that the *Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises* is seriously undercounting the employment capacity of black businesses.[32]

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The data indicate that blacks with college educations are making a significant contribution to the establishment of enterprises. But if the black inner city is to change, it must become a safe place for business enterprise. Government programs, spending billions of dollars in these areas, have made certain segments of the black population dependent on them and have taken away much of the incentive for enterprise.

Today's literature on minority business, concerned with the processes by which ethnic groups develop, maintain, and expand their interests within the economic structure,[33] suggests that demand side theories of entrepreneurship have not been able to explain the proliferation of ethnic or racial enterprises in America. Supply side theories of entrepreneurship, which concentrate on immigration, studied by Ivan Light and Angel Sanchez,[34] suggest that in every decennial census between 1880 and 1980, the foreign born systematically exhibited higher rates of self-employment. Foreign members of all racial groups, including those of African descent, are more likely to be self-employed than those born in America. Furthermore, self-employment is more common in groups within white America that have a history of exclusion than in those that have not suffered such discrimination. Thus, for example, when Jewish Americans are removed from the "white" category, the incidence of self-employment for white Americans drops considerably. The history of discrimination and hostility must be taken into account when the relationship between ethnicity and the ownership of business enterprise is considered.[35]

PRINCIPAL GROUPS OF BLACK PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

Myrdal's analysis of black professionals was done within the context of segregation and shows patterns not essentially different from those that exist today. Except for the substantially diminished presence in the clergy and the dramatic increase in the number of black nurses, the changes are insignificant. The number of black teachers, for example, has risen from 6.3 percent to 9.7 percent. What *Table 4* does not indicate, of course, is that many of these teachers were attached to schools outside the South. By far, the largest category included clergyman, with 16.8 percent; the next largest included

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musicians and teachers of music, with 6.4 percent; the smallest category was made up of lawyers, with only 0.8 percent.

TABLE 4. Number of Black Workers [Black Workers as a Percentage of All Workers]

Occupation	1940[a]	1950	1960	1970	1980
Teachers	66,104 [6.3%]	85,920 [7.6%]	133,852 [8.0%]	227,788 [8.2%]	354,176 [9.7%]
Clergymen	17,487 [12.9%]	18,870 [11.4%]	13,915 [6.9%]	13,739 [6.2%]	
Musicians and Teachers of Music	9,157 [6.2%]	9,540 [5.9%]	9,408 [4.8%]	6,605[b] [6.8%]	
Nurses	7,192 [1.9%]	15,390 [3.2%]	35,240 [5.4%]	66,400 [7.8%]	94,845 [7.5%]
Actors, Entertainers, Dancers, and Athletes	2,467 [4.6%]	3,090 [5.1%]	2,098 [4.2%]	3,732[c] [5.0%]	55,642[f] [4.3%]
Physicians, Surgeons, Dentists, and Veterinarians	5,228 [2.1%]	5,460 [2.1%]	7,643 [2.3%]	8,547[d] [2.2%]	
College Presidents and Professors	2,365 [3.1%]	3,900 [3.1%]	5,910 [3.3%]	16,582[e] [3.3%]	
Lawyers and Judges	1,063 [0.6%]	1,500 [0.9%]	2,440 [1.2%]	3,703 [1.3%]	14,839 [2.8%]

[a]For 1940, workers include employed persons and experienced workers seeking work. Figures for 1950–1980 are of the experienced civilian labor force.
[b]Musicians and composers.
[c]Actors, dancers, and athletes only.
[d]Dentists, veterinarians, and physicians (medical and osteopathic).
[e]College presidents not included.
[f]Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Labor Force. Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population*, vol. 3, pt. 1; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1950*, vol. 4, *Special Reports*, pt. 1, chap. A, "Employment and Personal Characteristics"; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1960. Subject Reports. Occupational Characteristics*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1970. Subject Reports. Occupational Characteristics*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of the Population: 1980. Subject Reports. Occupation by Industry.*

Perhaps the greatest change not revealed in *Table 4* is the participation of blacks in the military. Indeed, after Myrdal's work ap-

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peared, research began to show that opportunities for blacks were so restricted in the civilian sector that those blacks who had some experience of the military saw it increasingly as providing greater opportunities for advancement. In 1966, in *Black and White: A Study of U.S. Racial Attitudes Today,* William Brink and Louis Harris were struck by the quality of race relations in the military, as compared with civilian life. They devoted a chapter, entitled "A Home in the Service," to blacks in the military.[36]

"A home in the service" implies something more than a comfortable berth; it is a comment on the military as providing opportunity. Although the primary function of the military is the country's defense, a by-product of preparing soldiers for war is that it provides men and women with skills which can be taken back to civilian life.[37] Morris Janowitz notes that since the eighteenth century, the military has offered second chances to youths from lower-class backgrounds, giving those who did not have access to schools, or those who had access but failed, an opportunity for further education and development. Janowitz suggests that such second chances have been particularly prevalent since World War II.[38] Recent research has shown that veterans earn significantly more, with some exceptions, than their nonveteran counterparts in civilian life.[39] Black veterans continue to earn more than black nonveterans.[40]

When students of the military sought to explain why blacks receive greater opportunities in the service, many emphasized the unique organizational structure of the military. The long history of racial segregation was completely turned around when the movement toward racial equality got underway. Segregation rapidly became a non-issue. The rapid transformation in race relations and the opportunities provided blacks can best be explained by the military's rigid hierarchical structure, by its historic separation from the larger society. A presidential order flows directly to the military without voting or debate. Once the president gave the order for desegregation, things moved rapidly.[41]

During the period when the military was seen as providing a "home" for blacks, the service was partially filled by conscripts. Civic duty, a concept dear to the military, required officers and men to accept the legitimacy of desegregation. During the Korean conflict, a cross-section of American youth, drafted into the military, lived under new conditions of integration.

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The opportunities provided by the military took place at a time when there was almost a complete separation of workplace and residence. Once the pattern of racial desegregation got started, the discontinuous nature of military life enhanced the rapid transformation of race relations. The combination of workplace and residence meant that blacks and whites were forced to live with one another. The racial contact resulted in more positive attitudes, a more tolerant climate.[42] When blacks and whites were compared by age, rank, and time in the service, the positive attitudes formed through such racial contact remained, even during the more difficult periods when the country seemed again racially divided.[43]

Since the early republic, many blacks have participated in the military. The services have provided economic stability for many black families over the years, just as business has created the possibility of a degree of economic success for middleman groups. Perhaps more importantly, there is much to suggest that black individuals who choose the military as a career are also more likely to be college graduates.[44]

Myrdal's analysis of black teachers revealed what many already knew, that the segregated market protected jobs. Black educators throughout the South paid a high price for the decision to "integrate." Systematically replaced by whites in public school systems throughout the South, many were forced to find other kinds of employment. In 1965, a series of meetings held by the National Educational Association to establish immediate and long-range plans to halt the massive displacement of black teachers suggested how serious the problem had become. Throughout the South, blacks tried to cope with conditions created by the loss of black educators. The Alabama League for the Advancement of Education noted that

> . . .when large scale desegregation began, the number of black principals dropped from 620 to 362. The number of white principals dropped also, but over all, the percentage of black principals fell from 35 in 1966 to 25 in 1970. Also, while the hiring of new white principals has remained fairly constant, the hiring of new black principals has dropped to almost none. If the trend continues, within two years there will be no black principals.[45]

Although Myrdal provided excellent data to suggest how blacks fared in business and the professions, his analysis failed ultimately

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because he did not examine the relationship between oppression and business entrepreneurship. A theoretical perspective, established in a systematic way by Max Weber at the turn of the century, enabled recognition of the way in which certain oppressed groups turned to entrepreneurship and institutional building when discrimination closed off other possibilities. These groups produced a college-educated population and a professional class. This was true of a segment of Black America.

When viewed from this perspective, it is not surprising that the number of black professionals has not changed significantly over the years. Black professionals, overall, have always been produced by families with a strong emphasis on education:

> Fathers who were entrepreneurs produced 56 percent of the next generation's professionals and businessmen who were listed in *Who's Who in Colored America.* More importantly, this entrepreneurial sector produced slightly more than half of the college graduates from this community. Those parents who worked in skilled occupations produced the next highest number of college graduates, with 20 percent. This is followed by the common labor category, which produced 13 percent of the college graduates in the community.[46]

Although changes in the Civil Rights laws and other federal programs have been designed to increase the number of black professionals, continuing research suggests that the descendants of the black middlemen are still maintaining the tradition of producing black professionals.[47] Clearly, the values that made blacks successful as professionals in the early days are the same ones that make them successful today. The only difference is that the opportunity structure today is much broader.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

[1]Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), 304, chap. 14.

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 305.

[4]In Myrdal's analysis, wholesale and retail dealers were a separate category. For the census between 1940 to the present, this category was combined with the professional and semi-professional workers.

[5]Black small business owners occupied an intermediate position between these two groups, numbering 56,000 and making up about 1.5 percent of all American businessmen.

[6]For a discussion, see John Sibley Butler, "Self-Help and Adjustment to American Society," *Agenda: The Alternative Magazine of Critical Issues* (Washington, D.C.: Neighborhood Policy Institute/The National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, Fall 1990).

[7]Edna Bonacich and John Modell, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese Community* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1980).

[8]Alejandro Portes and Robert L. Bach, *Latin Journey: Cuban and Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985).

[9]All Jews did not adjust to America in this manner. See Walter P. Zenner, "American Jewry in the Light of Middleman Minority Theory," *Contemporary Jewry* (Fall 1980).

[10]See especially Illsoo Kim, "The Koreans: Small Business in an Urban Frontier," in Nancy Foner, ed., *New Immigrants in New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

[11]John Sibley Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans: A Reconsideration of Economics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

[12]W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania, 1899).

[13]The concept of the truncated middleman captures the fact that before the Civil War, black enterprises were in major business districts of American cities. Their clientele, therefore, represented people of all races. After the Civil War, they were cut off, or truncated, from the main business districts of America and forced to do business exclusively within their own group.

[14]Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans,* 236.

[15]Henry M. Minton, M.D., *Early History of Negroes in Business in Philadelphia,* address given before the American Historical Society, March 1913.

[16]See, for example, Juliet E. K. Walker, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise: Black Entrepreneurship in the United States Before the Civil War," *Business History Review* 60 (Autumn 1986): 33.

[17]Karl Marx, *Capital,* vols. 1–3 (New York: International Publishers, 1967).

[18]Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942).

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[19]For an excellent discussion of these issues, see Patricia Gene Greene, *A Theoretical and Empirical Study of Self-Employed Women,* dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, Department of Sociology, 1993.

[20]Myrdal, *An American Dilemma,* 307.

[21]Ibid., 310.

[22]Ibid., 308.

[23]Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans.*

[24]Kenneth Estell, ed., *The African-American Almanac* (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1994), 674.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]See Portes and Bach, *Latin Journey.*

[28]George Gilder, *The Spirit of Enterprise* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

[29]See, for example, Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in Business* (Chicago, Ill.: Hertel, Jenkins & Co., 1907).

[30]*Black Enterprise,* June 1992, 305.

[31]Thomas D. Boston, "Black Entrepreneurship and Economic Development: A Case Study of Atlanta," paper presented at the meetings of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, November 1994.

[32]Ibid., 22.

[33]Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans.*

[34]Ibid.

[35]For a discussion of these methodological problems see Ibid.

[36]William Brink and Louis Harris, *Black and White: A Study of U.S. Racial Attitudes Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966).

[37]For an analysis of the military as an opportunity structure see John Sibley Butler and Margaret A. Johnson, "An Overview of the Relationship Between Demographic Characteristics of Americans and Their Attitudes Towards Military Issues," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 19 (Winter 1991): 273–91.

[38]Morris Janowitz, "Basic Education and Youth Socialization in the Armed Forces," in Roger W. Little, ed., *Handbook of Military Institutions* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), 167–210.

[39]Dudley L. Poston, Mady Wechsler Segal, and John Sibley Butler, "The Influence of Military Service on the Civilian Earning Patterns of Female Veterans: Evidence from the 1980 Census," in Nancy H. Loring, ed., *Women in the United States Armed Forces* (Chicago, Ill.: Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, 1984), 52–71.

[40]Ibid.

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[41]This analysis followed the discussion by John Sibley Butler, "Race Relations in the Military," in Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood, eds., *The Military: More Than Just a Job?* (Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 115–27.

[42]Ibid.

[43]John Sibley Butler and Kenneth L. Wilson, "The American Soldier Revisited: Race Relations and the Military," *Social Science Quarterly* 59 (3) (December 1978).

[44]This thesis is developed in Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, eds., *Overcoming Race: Army Lessons for American Society* (forthcoming).

[45]Ibid.

[46]Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans,* 239.

[47]Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro College Graduate* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1938).

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